

"THE PRICE INEVITABLE"—BY MABEL HERBERT URNER.

VOL 30 No 4
MAR 17 1910

APRIL
1910

PRICE 25CTS

THE SMART SET



A
MAG
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ZINE
OF

A
New
Novel
of Vivid,
Intense Life—
A Subtle and
Powerful Handling
of a Big Vital Theme—
By the Author of
'THE JOURNAL OF A NEGLECTED WIFE.'

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Vol. XXX

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

No. 4

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Yearly Subscription \$3.00

Single Copies 25 Cents

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Entered at New York Post Office as second-class mail matter

Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company

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THE PRICE INEVITABLE

By MABEL HERBERT URNER

THE early dusk of a gray day was gathering in the long corridors of the Metropolitan Museum. Margaret hurried by the statues at the entrance, past the casts of early Roman emperors, up the wide marble steps to the art galleries. The place was not crowded; it was the smaller and leisurely throng of a "pay day" that strolled through the rooms. In the Flemish Gallery an art student was copying a Rembrandt head. And further on, another easel with a half-finished sketch stood before Van Dyck's Duke of Richmond.

At the entrance of the Catherine Wolfe Collection, Margaret paused—swept the room with a fluttering glance. He was standing before a picture at the far end. Instantly he seemed conscious of her presence, for he glanced up quickly, and now he was hurrying toward her.

She held out her hand with an uncertain smile. A strained silence followed the murmured words of greeting. They turned into the next gallery. She was intensely conscious that he was gazing down at her as she walked beside him. She put out her hand with a murmured:

"Oh, don't—please don't!"

"Forgive me. It has been so long."

"Three days?"

"Yes," bitterly, "three days."

A group of sightseers came by, intent on their catalogues. Just his touch on her arm, as he drew her a little aside that they might pass, made her pulses throb. Even after they had gone by, she still leaned slightly against him, and when she drew away they were both conscious of the move-

ment. It seemed to Margaret that every moment she was with him was weighted with an intense, thrilled consciousness of his slightest act.

"Will you let me take you to dinner tonight? I want to talk to you, Margaret, and we cannot talk here."

"But I thought—" in a low voice.

"That there was to be only an occasional meeting in the Park or the gallery? I am going to Denver tomorrow."

"To Denver?" The words were hardly more than a whisper.

"Yes; that is why I ask this."

"For—long?" A sick tremor was creeping over her.

"For several weeks—perhaps longer. An important case is to open there Monday."

"And it is necessary for you to go?"

"I have decided to go."

"It is necessary?"

"I think it is."

"On account of the—case?"

"No."

"Oh," with a hysterical little laugh.

"Do you think that will help?"

"It may."

"Then, wouldn't it have been better to go without—without even seeing me this afternoon?"

"Yes."

They walked on in silence—a throbbing silence. Presently he stopped her before a small Wyant landscape.

"The coloring in that is very good."

She made no answer.

"And that figure through the distance—and the shadows in the tree trunk—"

She made a gesture of impatience.

"And that damp, marshlike effect of the ground is very real."

"Oh, don't!" It was almost a sob.

"Then, will you go with me to dinner? I told you we could not talk here."

"Oh, yes, yes—anything would be better than this, now."

"Then, come."

And even though her heart seemed weighted, she thrilled at his tone of command, at his imperative touch on her arm as he guided her toward the entrance.

It was almost dark outside. The damp air blew cold into their faces as they came from the building. The street lamps made yellow blurs through the heavy mist.

He motioned to a cab.

"No, I would rather walk—at least, for a while."

"You are not tired?"

She shook her head.

"Then let us walk down through the Park."

They turned back into the Park, which was now almost deserted. The seats along the pathways were all empty; the air was too chill and raw for loitering. Lamps gleamed faintly here and there among the trees, lighting up a few skeleton branches and leaving the rest massed in obscurity.

A rustic bridge led over a small lake. Silently they looked down at the dark water, on which lay a long, golden bar from a solitary light on the bank. Something white shone from beside a projecting rock—two white ducks huddling close together, their heads under their wings. The quiet and peace of it all seemed in strange contrast to the roaring, glaring city just beyond. And there came to Margaret the longing to hold that moment, the rest and security of it, as she leaned beside him against the rail.

Reluctantly she let him lead her on. As they neared the exit, the towering buildings, with their myriad lights, seemed like menacing sentinels—lest she try to put aside for more than a moment the problems and difficulties that lay before her.

The walk through the Park had been almost in silence, and now, as they entered the brilliantly lighted hotel restaurant, Margaret felt herself shuddering away from the thought of words; there was still a sense of nearness and understanding in their silence that she felt words would dispel.

She was glad of the hovering presence of the waiter, of the need to order that kept his attention from her for a little while. He had secured a table in a secluded corner of the room, and when at length the waiter hurried off they were practically alone.

Their eyes met. For a moment she looked at him unwaveringly, and then faltered before the unveiled tenderness in his glance. A faint color crept into her cheeks.

"Are you tired?" gently.

"A little. And let us not talk about—about tomorrow yet."

"No, dear, not yet."

He understood her mood. She wanted to put it off—to have at least part of their evening, as though tomorrow were not to be.

The orchestra in the next room was playing Rubinstein's plaintive "Barcarole," and to Margaret the minor strains seemed like the cry of her own heart in an impassioned protest against an implacable fate. She sipped her wine with the hope that it would give her courage, that it would take away some of the chill weight that lay upon her.

"You will try to eat something?" with a glance at her untouched oysters.

She nodded.

They tried to talk, tried to seem natural, to ignore the thing that filled both their minds. But it was forced and strained, and it was Margaret herself who gave up the effort, who swept aside her own request by an abrupt:

"And you think it will help?"

"I hope it will help."

"And when you come back, you think we shall have ceased to care?"

"Margaret, you know I don't think that. But I hope in the long absence we will have time to think more clearly—to realize how impossible it is."

"We don't realize that now?"

"Not quite—no. I find myself constantly hoping, believing almost, that something will happen—some way will open up, that chance or fate will in some way bring things around. And yet I know it is impossible—there is nothing that *could* happen that would help us, nothing that would not bring untold suffering to someone else. And we can never take our happiness that way."

"No—no," in a low voice.

"Oh, if there were only some solution!" bitterly. "I spend hours thinking, planning, going over every possible phase. But there is no solution. It always comes back to the one thing: I cannot leave her. It would kill her—and we could not be happy at that cost."

There was a long silence. He was gazing across the room with a stern, set face, and Margaret moved her wine-glass back and forth with a trembling hand.

"And when you come back—" falteringly.

"When I come back, Margaret, I hope to have more strength, strength enough—" He hesitated.

"Not to see me."

He did not answer.

"And I—I—" with a stifled sob, "where shall I get strength? Have you thought of that?"

"More than of anything else. But you have the strength, Margaret. Slight and frail as you are, you have the strongest will, the strongest pride of anyone I have ever known."

"And you are counting on that! You are depending on my pride to keep me up—to lash me on! Could anything be more cruel than that?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"For me to stay—to absorb more of your youth—your life, when I have nothing to offer you."

A sudden reckless motion of her hand swept over the wineglass. She watched the small, red splash slowly spread over the white cloth. What was it symbolic of—that slowly spread-

ing stain? What was she trying to think of?

The waiter came up, covered the cloth with a napkin and refilled her glass.

"But if I should cry out that I could not bear it? If my pride and strength should fail—if I should break down, throw everything aside and send for you?"

A sudden light came into his eyes as he leaned toward her.

"Margaret!" The word was like a caress.

Involuntarily she stretched her hand across the table and he covered it with his own. But almost at once he released it. Slowly the light went from his eyes; they were once more grave and somber. And Margaret felt as though she had actually seen the crushing down of something within him—as though, with his strong veined hands, he had subdued and broken some struggling thing. When at length he answered her his voice was almost cold.

"Should you ever send for me—you know I will come. But I know, Margaret, that you will never send."

"Oh—oh," with a hysterical little laugh, "that is only another goad to my pride—another way of lashing me on! You are doing it thoroughly—making quite sure—"

"Don't, dear," gently. "We have only a few more moments, and bitterness will not help us."

Only a few moments more! She put her hand to her throat. She had not realized that it was late, that many diners had come and gone since they were there. A few moments more! Something like terror, a panic-stricken terror, swept through her.

"Oh, I cannot bear it! Say something to help me—to make it easier!"

"What must I say, Margaret? What *can* I say?" Again he covered her hand with his. "There is nothing I can say or do—except to love you enough to leave you. If I loved you less—if I respected you less—do you think I would go away now? Oh, Margaret, Margaret, don't you know it is because I love you so much?"

With averted face she struggled against the sobs that choked her throat.

At length he said gently: "Come, dear; we must go."

When Margaret rose from the table she was trembling so that for a moment she wondered if she would have the strength to cross the room. He took her cloak from the waiter and put it around her; he would never let a waiter help her with her wraps.

Outside a cab was waiting. She heard him give her address to the driver. It was not far—in a few moments they would be there. And he would leave her at the door. Only a few moments more—a few moments!

She was leaning back in the shadow of the cab, her hands clasped tight in her lap. She must not cry out—she must not cling to him! She was saying that over and over to herself.

Suddenly he leaned forward and took both her hands in his.

"Margaret, I want to leave the cab before we reach your hotel. I want to tell you good-bye here—not in a glaring hotel lobby."

She made a faint motion of assent. And then very gently he drew her toward him until she lay within his arms.

"I love you, Margaret; I love you!" For a moment longer he held her in silence. And that was all. Abruptly he released her and, without stopping the cab, threw open the door and sprang out.

II

DEAR GRAHAM:

Now that you are really coming home, and won't think I am trying to hurry you, I can say that these five weeks have seemed like years. I have not known what to do with myself or my time. The few days' illness I wrote you of last week I know was brought on by sheer loneliness and longing for you.

You persuaded me not to go with you because of the hardships of the trip and lack of accommodations in the mining districts. As though any mere physical discomfort could be so hard as the loneliness of these weeks! Oh, Graham, I have missed you so! Promise that you will never leave me so long again. I can stand any hardship but that of separation from you.

And your letters—they have been so short and unsatisfying—mere notes, brief details of the case, and nothing, almost nothing about yourself. But then I know you have been very busy and that I ought not to complain.

I have had your room, the library, hall and dining room, thoroughly gone over, the ceilings retouched and all the woodwork and floors recoiled. I have done this because I know you hate the disturbance of house cleaning—and because it has given me something to do, to look after.

Max misses you almost as much as I; he wanders restlessly about the house, sniffs at your chair in the dining room and seems a very disconsolate dog. Yesterday, when I was going over your clothes closet and straightening out your things, Ellen called me away for a few moments. When I came back upstairs Max had dragged down one of your bathrobes and was lying upon it. I tried to take it from under him, but he growled most fiercely. And Ellen—even Ellen asks anxiously every day just when you will return. So you see we are all wanting you to come home, dear—Max, Ellen and your wife,

MARY.

For the last half-hour he had held the letter, and now he slowly folded it, returned it to his pocket and once more gazed out at the flying fields and telegraph poles. Now and then, as another train whizzed past, his face was reflected in the momentarily darkened window. He was thinner and more haggard; the five weeks had left their mark.

"And do you think that will help?" How those words haunted him! No, it had not helped. He was coming back with a greater longing, a more consuming need of her than ever. Work—work—he would go on fighting it with work, ceaseless, feverish work. He chafed against the enforced idleness of these two days' traveling. Tomorrow he would be in his office.

But before the solace of tomorrow's work—lay his homeward this evening. He must meet Mary kindly; he must try to respond to her caresses. The letter in his pocket—all the letters he had received in these five weeks were only additional proofs of her love and trust, her pitiful dependence upon him. Whatever the cost of dissembling, he must not fail her.

It was growing dusk. The porter

came through and turned on the lights. The dreary stretch of darkening fields outside emphasized the atmosphere of comfort, of seclusion, of warmth and intimacy in the gleaming, polished wood, the mirrors and velvet fittings of the speeding car.

For a few moments he leaned back and gave himself up to the thoughts and dream pictures he had been fighting against all day. She was there beside him; now and then her hair brushed his shoulder as he bent toward her, and sometimes she would lay her small, ungloved hand on his, as she drew his attention to something out the window. She was a little tired from the long trip. Her hair was slightly loosened and fell carelessly around the small, delicate face, which seemed pale against the background of the dark velvet seat.

Abruptly he rose and strode back to the observation car, where he walked restlessly up and down the aisle. How could he hope to forget if he yielded to thoughts like that?

It was almost seven when at length, over an hour late, they drew into Jersey City. With the aid of a porter he shrugged into his overcoat, gathered up his bags and hurried out through the station to the waiting ferry, glad of the inclemency that drove the other passengers inside and left him alone.

The scattered lights in the towering buildings seemed like the still glowing frameworks of some great pyrotechnic display. It was about this same hour, one evening, that she had crossed the ferry with him—just for the effect of the lights. Desperately he threw the thought from him. Was every hour to be stained with some memory? Had he gained so little control of his thoughts?

A creaking of chains, a heavy, jarring thud—the boat had landed. He threw his bags into the first cab and was whirled off toward his home. In a few moments he must meet his wife. He must think of something kind to say; he must not seem abstracted. He must do his best to make her happy.

But when he ran up the wide stone

steps it was with a sense of entering someone else's house; it seemed strangely foreign and unfamiliar. The heavy door yielded to his latchkey. He had hardly put down the bags and thrown off his coat when Mary came running down the stairs.

"Oh, Graham, Graham!" She threw herself in his arms, kissing him again and again. And he hated himself for his coldness and his desire to draw away.

"Oh, I thought you would never come! I was growing frightened. What made the train so late?"

"I wrote you it might be late; that through train often is."

"Oh, I know, but not so late as this! And I wanted to come to meet you; why did you write me not to?"

"Just because, dear, I was afraid it would be late. I didn't want you waiting down there so long."

"As if I would have minded that! But I mustn't keep you standing here; I know you are tired. Won't you come in to dinner, just as you are? Ellen has it all ready, and you are too tired to dress."

"No, I'll not dress, but I must freshen up some. It won't take me long."

She followed him up to his room, hovered about him, laid out collars and cuffs, full of solicitude for his comfort.

Restive under her anxious attentions, he was glad when Max came bounding into the room, barking and leaping wildly about him in frenzied joy.

"Down, Max—good old boy!"

"Oh, Max has missed you so!" And then suddenly she turned and threw her arms about him. "Oh, Graham—Graham—you won't go away again without taking me? Say that you won't—I couldn't bear another five weeks like these; promise me that you never will!"

"Why, no—of course not, Mary. Why, dear—what's the matter?" She was sobbing brokenly, her face hidden against his arm. "Don't, dear—don't do that. I'm not going away again."

He stroked her hair awkwardly. "There, now—take Max down with you, and I'll freshen up and come down in a moment."

When she had gone he locked his door and walked back and forth across the room with bent head. It was going to be harder even than he had thought.

During the dinner he tried to tell her of his trip and to seem interested in her account of the house and servants. She was much worried about his health. He assured her that he was merely tired and would be all right in a few days.

"Shall we have the coffee in the library tonight? You will be more comfortable and can rest better there."

"Why, yes, Mary, if you wish—but I'm afraid I'll have to go down to the office for a little while this evening; there are some letters I want to get off—"

"Tonight—when you are so tired! Surely, Graham, you're not going to the office tonight?"

"I'm afraid I must, Mary, for a little while."

"But can't you write the letters here?"

"There are some files I must go over—some data I must have about a contract."

"And can't you do that tomorrow?"

"If I get it off tonight it will reach Chicago Saturday. If I wait until tomorrow they won't get it until Monday, and that will be too late for the bids. The sealed bids on that work are opened at ten o'clock, Monday."

Half an hour later he left the house. He walked on, with bent head, unheeding the fine mist that was falling. Part of it had been true—some points, as to a former contract, must reach his clients Saturday. But a telegram or even a special delivery letter would have served his purpose. The thought of going to the office tonight had come as a sudden, compelling impulse to avoid the long evening in the library. Even as he spoke he had hated the partial untruth, and now he was filled with a bitter contempt of his weakness. What would the future be if the mere thought

of spending an evening with Mary had driven him to such subterfuge? Had his love for another woman made the mere companionship of his wife unbearable? No. Fiercely he denied that. He had a great respect, a great tenderness for Mary—nothing could ever alter that. Her presence could never be distasteful. He found himself repeating this over and over again.

He walked many blocks before, at length, he took a car. It was just nine when he reached his office. The great building loomed up dark and deserted. He greeted the night watchman, who sat near the door, half dozing, his chair tilted back. The elevators were not running, and his every step echoed through the silent, dimly lit halls as he hurried up the stairs.

At the seventh floor he turned to the right, down a long passage, unlocked a door, passed through the outer rooms to his private office. The blinds were up and an electric sign across the street shone through the windows, flooding the place with a pale, ghostly light.

A strange atmosphere of awaiting, of expectancy, seemed over everything. All the instruments of the busy activities of the day—the typewriter, the mimeograph, the telephone—now seemed tensely waiting for the onslaught of the morrow.

Some unanswered letters lay in a wire basket on his stenographer's desk, with her neatly arranged pencils and note books. The tiny clock she always kept there was ticking away, a loud insistent sound in the still room.

He unlocked his desk, turned on the green-shaded light that hung over it, took down some files, found the contract and wrote the letter. He sealed and stamped it with a sense of relief, not on account of the letter, but because he had fulfilled the mission on which he had said he must come.

And now the next few moments he claimed for his own. He crossed over to a large safe near the window and swiftly worked the combination. The heavy door swung open. He unlocked an inner compartment, and then took from his pocket a key to a small, secret

drawer. A bundle of letters, a long white glove, a lace handkerchief, some faded flowers and a picture in its tissue paper sheath lay before him.

His hand trembled as he drew out the picture. The delicate profile, the slight droop of the head, the sensitive mouth, the inexpressible sadness and sweetness of the face. "Oh, Margaret! Margaret!" The whispered word sounded strangely in that still place.

How often in these weeks of absence he had tried to fix each delicate feature in his memory—but something always eluded him. He took the picture over and held it under the desk light. Never had he felt so strongly the haunting sadness of the face. The lips seemed almost quivering into a cry of her loneliness—her need of him.

Her need of him—nothing made it harder than his realization of that. All her life she had been alone—a frail, shrinking, supersensitive woman forced to meet life alone—to fight her own way from early girlhood. She had done it bravely, courageously, but with a silent suffering, a constant flinching and recoiling that had made her withdraw more and more within herself.

He had first met her through the settling of an estate of her uncle's, her only near relative, who had left her a small interest in some mining property. The family had tried to protest the legacy, small as it was. And Margaret's pride and her willingness to relinquish her interest, rather than have the publicity of a suit, had aroused his keenest sympathy. That had been over three years ago, and he knew now that he had loved her from the very beginning.

And her work—the drudgery of a free lance writer—special articles, book reviews and short stories. She had never complained, but he knew how hard it was for her, how she shuddered away not so much from the work itself as from the need to "market" it.

And yet he was powerless to help her; he could not shield or protect or provide for her in any way. Her pride rose before him always—an insurmountable thing. Why should he go

on, he thought bitterly, striving to increase his wealth, when he could use none of it to help the woman he loved?

As he stood there, still looking down at the picture, his arm touched the telephone by his desk, the slight jar causing the faintest whisper of the bell. The telephone! All through the last year it had had for him a new and wonderful meaning—2589 Gramercy—her number! Her soft, clear voice! Every blue telephone sign in the city had come to mean that to him.

And now—even now—he had only to take down that receiver and give that number. The thought thrilled through him. How near it brought her—how it seemed to break down the barriers of all these weeks! And yet—the lines around his mouth grew tense—he could never call that number again. He must face the future, knowing that always by his desk was an instant means of reaching her. And when he walked home, wherever he went, every shop and drug store would hold the same possibility.

And the same condition, he knew, confronted Margaret. She must make the same struggle—with the same temptation always near. She had told him once, after a slight misunderstanding, which had estranged them for a week, of the many times during that week she had gone to the telephone, had sometimes even taken down the receiver—only to hang it back without giving the number. At the last moment her pride would keep her from it.

Unheeding the time, he sat brooding there by his desk, her picture still before him, living over the hours they had spent together. It was almost midnight when at length he rose and replaced the picture in the safe.

Before he locked the compartment he took out for a moment the long white glove. Her own faint fragrance clung about it yet, and the soft kid seemed still to hold the delicate lines of her hand. He could almost feel her small fingers within his clasp. "Margaret—Margaret!" For a second time that night he spoke aloud her name. While the word still hung on the air a

shrill, startling ring came from the telephone.

A telephone call at midnight—in his office! Mental telepathy—the power of suggestion—all that he had ever heard of it seemed flashing through his mind. Had his very longing forced her to him at this time?

"Hello!" His voice rang tense with the hope that was in him.

"Oh, Graham—I was afraid something had happened! You said you would be gone only a short time—and it's after twelve. Aren't you through? Can't you come home now?"

It was several seconds before he answered. His silence was so long that she repeated her questions in alarm.

Then he said quietly: "I am sorry you were worried, Mary. I am through and am leaving now."

III

"If this had not happened, if chance had not brought this about, would you have gone on—as you were?"

"Margaret—I don't know. I fought it out for six months—and there was not a day in that time that I did not turn to the telephone with an irresistible longing to call you. The letters I have written you—and torn up; the times I have walked by this hotel at night, just to be near you—"

"And yet you would have gone on? Had it not been for this accident—we should never have been together again?"

"Dear, I don't know—I tell you, I don't know. But surely you know it was for your sake I was making that fight—that I felt it was for your best good."

"And hers!"

"Don't, dear—don't be bitter now."

"No—no—I shouldn't have said that. But oh, I can't help shrinking from the thought that we are together again merely because of an accident! I can't help wishing that if it was to be, that it was because your love was stronger than your will—than everything else!"

"And yet if my love had been less I would have come—I would not have left you when I did. Can't you understand that, Margaret?"

"Yes—in a way. But oh, I have suffered so—the sleepless nights—the days of loneliness—all the time hoping, waiting, sometimes even *believing* that you would come!"

"A word from you would have brought me. You know that."

"That was the hardest part of all—to keep from saying the word. But I *could* not! If I had any vestige of pride—I could not do that! It wasn't as if I had sent you away from me; I hadn't. You had gone because you felt it was the only way. How, then, could I send for you?"

"Yes, I realized that; and I knew the strength of your pride. And yet—I never took up my mail without a faint hope that there might be some word. And the telephone never rang around eleven in the morning that my heart did not leap with the thought that it might be you."

"And one morning it was!"

"One morning it was? What do you mean?"

The color rushed to her face. "I did call you one morning."

"Darling—you did? And I was not there?"

"Yes, you were there—you spoke to me."

"Dear, I don't understand."

"I suppose I shouldn't tell you—it seems so weak. But I could not help it—I so longed to hear your voice. Don't you remember one morning your telephone rang—and when you answered there was no one there? You called 'Hello!' several times—and finally hung up the receiver. Don't you remember?"

"And that was you?"

"It was the hardest thing I ever did—not to speak; to hear your voice and not answer you!"

"Margaret, you did that—and I never knew!"

"And oh, I felt that you should have known! If there is anything in telepathy or suggestion—it seemed that

you would *feel* I was there! And you didn't? The thought never came to you?"

"No, dear, not then. I think there was a stockholders' meeting in my office that morning, and I was very busy—perhaps that was the reason."

"So it was a stockholders' meeting that excluded any thought of me!"

"And you know how quickly I would have disbanded that meeting if I had dreamed that it was you."

He drew her toward him and kissed very gently her forehead and hair.

"Oh, Margaret—Margaret—these months have been so hard! There were times when I felt I couldn't go on. Often I have got up from my desk and walked around my office, feeling how useless it was to work. What had I to work for? It all seemed so purposeless and empty without you!"

"Oh, I know—I know. I felt all that and more. Graham, I suffered so—it was so cruel." With a sob she hid her face against his shoulder. "It was so pitifully cruel. But now we are together again—we are together again! It seems as if nothing else in the world matters—except just that we are together again."

"Yes, dear, we are together again. And yet things are just as they were before. Nothing has been solved; no condition has been altered. And for your sake, I am afraid of the future."

For a moment he paused. She did not speak; her face was still hid against his shoulder.

"Margaret, in the past I have been strong enough to shield you from myself. But I feel I cannot answer for the future. You must know that was why I left you, why I fought so hard to stay away."

He rose and walked to the window, stood there for several moments and then turned and took his seat beside her again.

"There is something else I want to say now—something I feel I must say. The thought may have come to you, as it has many times to me, that should our love ever be complete, it might weaken my resolutions about

her, make my sense of duty to her less. Margaret, it might do all that—but it could not make me leave her. The very fact that I felt myself weakening would make me more grimly determined *not* to leave her. It would in no way be her fault, and, should we be swept away by our love, we must be the ones to suffer—not she."

He was looking down at her hand that he had taken in his own, musingly tracing the veins.

"I am telling you this now that you may never build false hopes on something that can never be. Margaret, if I had the strength to do what I know is right and best for your happiness, I would leave you again now—leave you in some harsh, abrupt way that would make any reconciliation impossible."

"And again lash me on by my pride to silence."

"It would be best for you."

"And you can do that now?"

"No."

Again he rose abruptly and walked over to the window. She remained motionless, her hands lying in her lap, just as he had released them.

There was a slight whirring sound from a small clock on the mantel; then with irritating slowness it struck five.

"That simplifies things some," with a harsh laugh and without turning round.

"How? What do you mean?"

"In the need to meet the problem of the moment we can shirk those of the future. We might pursue that plan and lessen our responsibility. No doubt each day's difficulties will be sufficient."

She went over to the window beside him. "Only a few moments ago you asked *me* not to be bitter!"

"Yes, I know; I'll not be."

She laid her hand on his arm.

"What is it—some early engagement with—Mrs. Whitman?"

"Yes."

"And you must go now?"

"I *should* go now."

"Then go, dear. We don't want to make this day, the day that has brought us together again, the cause of unhap-

piness or even disappointment to—to anyone."

"I thought of that."

"Then, don't be late. Don't keep her waiting. Oh, Graham, I feel so happy—so filled with the joy of just being with you again, that it is easy to be generous; I *want* to be! No—no—I shouldn't use that word; I don't mean quite that. I am in no position to be *generous*—least of all to her. I only mean—oh, I don't quite know how to express it!"

"It isn't necessary, dear. I know what you mean. I think I have very much the same feeling about it. And I can still be on time—if I go now, at once."

He stooped down and kissed her gently. "I suppose," with a smile that was both sad and bitter, "we might express it something like this: Under conditions that we know are wrong and that we haven't the strength to make right—we are going to do the best we can."

It was almost seven before Margaret rose from the chair by the window where she had been since he left. The room had grown dark—and still she sat there. For the first time in months she rested. Oh, the inexpressible peace and quiet that had come to her now! The few moments he had held her in his arms seemed to have drawn from her the anguished ache of all these months.

He had come back—he was with her again! She would see him tomorrow—the next day! Whatever the future held, they would not be wholly parted again. Nothing mattered but that. And as she sat there in the deepening dusk, there stole over her such a sense of peace, of rest, as can only come with the relaxation of some prolonged strain.

When at length she rose and flooded the room with light, the first thing that sprang into view was the telephone. How different it looked to her now! For months it had seemed to dominate the room with its grim silence; it had been a constant, torturous reminder. And now the whole atmosphere of the

instrument seemed different. She knew now that over and over again it would bring her his voice—and yet only a few hours ago she had thought it never would. Only a few hours—and yet they had been enough to change for her the whole world.

If she had not gone out today—or if she had gone a moment earlier or a moment later! If she had not taken the Subway, or even if she had walked to the right instead of to the left of that crowded platform! Was it upon such trivial incidents that her happiness depended? No; she felt that it was infinitely more than a chance meeting.

All these months she had anticipated and prepared herself for some unexpected encounter. Sooner or later, in the course of things, it would come. She had pictured meeting him on the street, in the park, at the theater. They would bow—a brief, formal salute—and pass on.

But how different it had been! In that swaying, throbbing moment when she saw him there before her everything else was swept away. In a second he was at her side.

"Margaret!" And then he had half led, half carried her up the steps, out of the Subway and into a passing cab. From that first second she knew in both their minds the thought that they were together again not to separate was as instinctive, as uncontrollable as it was fixed.

But for the half-smothered exclamation of her name, no word was spoken until they reached her apartment. To Margaret that drive was only a vague memory of a kaleidoscopic mingling of streets and buildings which wavered before her in the sunlight.

And the first half-hour in her apartment—she had no coherent memory even of that. She knew only that she had broken down completely, and that all the anguish and heartache of these months she had sobbed out in his arms.

That night, before Margaret went to bed, she knelt for a long time by the open window, looking out over the city with its myriad lights. How of-

ten she had knelt there in the nights past—the weight of her loneliness and despair so heavy upon her that she had sent out to him voiceless cries for help, knowing he was somewhere in that great, seething city, and by some power of thought he might feel her wordless message and come to her!

But now her thoughts became a half-formed prayer—a resolve that the great happiness that had come to her today should *never be the cause of bringing unhappiness to anyone else*. She repeated his words: "Under conditions that we know are wrong and that we haven't the strength to make right—we are going to do the best we can." Yes, they would do the best they could.

IV

THE happiness of the weeks that followed was intensified by the long period of suffering that had gone before. "Just to be together again"—a phrase that was constantly on Margaret's lips—seemed to fill the whole world with joy.

They vied with each other now in accepting cheerfully the difficulties of their position. The few hours he could be with her seemed so much after the silence and emptiness of the months they had passed. Just a note or a few words over the telephone was enough to flood a whole day with sunshine.

"If we might always be content with so little!" he said wistfully one day.

"We will—we will!" she assured him. "After all, suffering has its salutary lesson—and we have had ours."

The first word of protest, of discontent, came from him, in a note brought her by a messenger one morning about a month later.

I am afraid I shall not be able to get down to the office this morning nor take luncheon with you as we planned. Have had a rather high fever all night, and it doesn't seem to be much better now.

If I could see you for a few moments or even talk to you over the 'phone—but I don't know how it can be managed. Someone is constantly about, so I cannot telephone from here. But won't you call me up? Should the maid or anyone else come

to the 'phone, just say you are a client and wish to speak to me personally. I will have to be guarded in my answers, but you, at least, can talk freely.

How I hate the necessity for all these schemes and deceptions! And I know you do, too. It is a constant humiliation to us both. And yet there seems to be no other way. I feel discouraged this morning, and more than usually rebellious. I want to be with you openly, without the need for all these evasions and falsehoods.

I came down to the library this morning, and am lying on the couch here. The 'phone is in this room, and to be by it seems to bring me a little nearer to you. Will try to send another note this evening. But you must not worry. It is nothing serious. Expect to be out in a few days.

He was ill—a fever—and she could not be with him! Her heart cried out bitterly against the conditions that kept her from him now. All the mother love that in some degree every woman gives to the man she loves was now aroused. She wanted to nurse him, to soothe and comfort him, to wait on and croon over him until he was well. And she could not even see him!

With eyes full of tears she turned through the telephone book. As familiar as was his office number, she had never telephoned to his home. There it was—"WHITMAN, GRAHAM K. Res. 3240 River."

She went over to the 'phone. What should she say? What could she say that would cheer him? He had written that he was discouraged. She gave the number to Central. There was a long wait. Her heart beat fast. The sound of a receiver being taken from the hook, and then—his voice!

"Oh, I am so glad you answered! I was afraid it would be someone else."

"I have been lying here watching the telephone and wondering when it would ring. Fortunately, just at this moment I am alone. I wonder if you know how much I have been thinking about you all morning?"

"Oh, but you are ill! And I can't be with you—I can't even see you!"

"I know—it all seems wrong somehow."

"But if you should become very ill—too ill to send me any message? How

could I hear from you? Tell me now so I'll know."

"I can't now—I hear someone coming. Don't worry. I will be all right." And then, in an entirely different voice, a curt business voice: "Yes, I expect to be down to the office in a few days."

"Is someone with you now?" she asked almost in a whisper, as though afraid her voice would carry beyond him.

"Yes."

"You will try to send me some message this evening?" still in a whisper.

"Yes."

"Then I will say good-bye now; I can't bear to talk to you like this."

She hung up the receiver with an unreasoning sense of hurt. Even though she knew the necessity for the brief curtness of his replies, she could not but feel chilled. That *she* should have come into the room just then! She pictured her waiting on him, looking after the medicines and nourishment with an air of authority and ownership. In vain she tried to keep the bitterness out of her heart.

The day passed, filled with anxious thoughts. When dusk came and brought no further message, her anxiety increased. Six—seven o'clock—and still no word from him.

She hesitated to telephone again. If he had found it impossible even to send her a note, it might not be wise for her to telephone. It was about half past seven when at length she yielded to an impulse that had been hovering in her thoughts all day. She would drive by his house! She would get as near him as she could. Just to pass by his home might help to ease her restless anxiety.

Hurriedly she slipped into her wraps and ordered a cab. The cabman stared at her unusual directions—merely to drive to West Seventy-third Street and then go very slowly through that street.

It was the theater hour and they passed many cabs and carriages, from which gleamed light gowns and jewels. She wished the driver had taken a less

crowded thoroughfare; just now she shrank from this atmosphere of gaiety.

When they neared the street, she leaned forward tensely. Just one more block now! One hundred and ninety-seven was the number. With strained eyes she followed the numbers, 191—193—195—197! A large gray stone house, with an air of almost stern severity. Lights glimmered behind drawn blinds only on the first floor; the second and third story windows were dark.

At the corner she had the cabman turn and drive back slowly through the same street. As they passed the house again a light flashed suddenly in the second story, and an arm with a white-frilled sleeve drew down one of the shades.

Margaret leaned back with a sudden faintness. It was not the sleeve of a maid or nurse. *It was a lace-frilled sleeve of a housegown!*

"Where to now, ma'am?" It was the cabman's voice. He repeated it again before she heard him. She started, and then answered dully, "Back to the hotel."

That night she spent in sleepless tossing. Only toward morning she fell asleep, and then it was to dream that she was at the gates of a wonderful garden. From within came the sound of music and happy voices, and through it all she heard his voice calling her, calling again and again in tones of tenderest longing. The way was open; she started forward, stumbling in her eagerness, when suddenly an arm with a white-frilled sleeve closed fast the high iron gates. She beat against them until her hands were bruised and bleeding, but her cries were unanswered and she was left alone in a dreary wilderness.

At ten the next day there was still no message. Was he worse? Was he too ill to write? Filled with dread and anxiety, she stood at the window looking down at the street below, watching for a blue-coated messenger who might be bringing some word. Twice she saw one approaching, an envelope in his hand. Her heart leaped. But each time the boy passed on.

At any risk she must know how he was—she would telephone. It was a maid that answered; she spoke brokenly and her voice was hard to understand. Mr. Whitman was sick, she said, and could not come to the 'phone. And when Margaret asked if he was very ill—worse than he was yesterday—she answered that she did not know, that the doctor was with him now. To Margaret those words seemed weighted with terror.

There are times in everyone's life when one is swept on to some rash act, knowing it is so, and yet being unable to control the impulse that forces one on. And so Margaret was now helpless before the reckless, compelling desire to go to him—to see him if possible; if not, to learn from someone there, from someone who knew, just how ill he was. Why should she not go—a client calling on some urgent matter? No one there knew her!

Once more she slipped into her wraps and ordered a cab. When she gave the address to the driver there was a curious note of mingled defiance and fear in her voice.

The long ride through crowded thoroughfares, then the same street, the same house—197! The cab stopped. The man sprang from his seat and opened the door. For just a second Margaret shrank back. And then, with a sick beating of her heart and her limbs weak with trembling, she stepped out and went up the steps.

A trim maid opened the door. She entered the reception room and gave the girl her card.

"I should like to see Mr. Whitman."

"Mr. Whitman is ill, ma'am. I'm afraid you cannot see him."

"Will you take him this card?"

There was something in her low, tense voice that made the girl hesitate, and then turn to do her bidding.

In spite of the tumultuous agitation of her thoughts, Margaret was keenly conscious of every detail of the room, of the brooding silence of the house, the hushed pause that seemed over everything.

This was his home. These things he

saw and touched daily. All this was a part of his life—the life he shared with another woman! These things were their common property. She had no part in it; in all this great house there was nothing she could claim. For a second she had a fierce desire to take something away with her, to assert to herself the right to it because it was *his*. Her eyes rested on a cabinet in the corner—it was full of small trinkets. She half moved toward it, then turned quickly away, a deep color flooding her face.

A moment later came the sound of voices from the hall.

"I find him somewhat better this morning, Mrs. Whitman. The fever may increase again this evening, but it will not be as high as it was yesterday."

"But, Doctor, he insists on being brought down into the library. I don't think that is wise, do you?"

"Well, no—perhaps not for a day or two yet. It's just as well to keep him as quiet as you can."

He was better! He was not seriously ill! Margaret forgot everything in the joy of that! The outer door closed after the doctor; then a rustle of silk and a tall, middle-aged woman entered the room.

"Miss Warren?" She glanced at the card in her hand. "Mr. Whitman is quite ill; it would be impossible for him to see anyone this morning. I am Mrs. Whitman—if there is any message you wish to leave."

"No—no, thank you," she murmured. "It—it is merely a matter of business—that can be postponed."

Without any clear memory of how she left the house, Margaret found herself outside. For blocks she walked on unmindful of the direction. And that was his wife—his wife! In those few seconds her features and expression had been burnt into her memory. The strongest impression had been one of age—she looked so much older than he!

An obstructed crossing finally brought her to a consciousness of her surroundings. She was in a neighborhood of

cheap flats and many children. Several blocks farther on she caught a glimpse of an elevated structure. She made her way toward it.

Would he know that she had been there? Would her card be given him? What would he think? Now the realization of what she had done—of how it might appear to him—began to assert itself. Her face burned. Of course he would know it was her anxiety that brought her. And yet—might he not think that her pride and sense of reserve should have been stronger even than that?

When she reached the hotel there was a note awaiting her. The clerk said it had come just a few moments after she left.

All yesterday afternoon and evening I tried to get some word to you. But it was impossible. Someone was with me every moment. I knew it must seem to you that I should have found some way. But I could not without arousing suspicions that might make it difficult for us in the future. I am better this morning, and am looking forward to seeing you in a few days.

If she had only waited—just a few moments more! Now, with the knowledge of his improvement, her fears and anxiety seemed groundless. Why had she done this thing? She had not only taken an unwarranted risk, but one that had in it something of indelicacy, almost of intrusion. And she had always been so proudly reticent! A torturing sense of regret and humiliation hung over her, until about five o'clock that afternoon a messenger brought her another note.

I have just learned that you were here. Darling, how dear of you to come! I know now how anxious you were, and it makes you seem very near and dear to me. I want to assure you that it is all right. I thought you might be worried afterward. I was simply told that a young lady called on business. Evidently it made no other impression. Had I only known when you were here, nothing could have prevented me from seeing you. I hope you will not feel hurt, dear, at the way it happened. You are so sensitive that I am afraid, after yielding to your generous impulse, you may now regret it. Don't, dear, for I love you more than ever for this proof of your love and anxiety.

Margaret pressed her cheek against the note, thrilled with a deeper realization of his love and thoughtfulness.

It was over a week before he could leave the house, and when he came to Margaret she was frightened at the worn haggardness of his face. After the first joy of their meeting she realized that he was utterly depressed and discouraged. Anxiously she pleaded with him to tell her what was wrong.

"Oh, it has all been so horrible! I don't mean the fever. If I could have gone off in some room alone, I would not have minded that. But Mrs. Whitman was with me night and day, waiting on me constantly. I insisted on having a nurse, but she would not hear of it—said she wanted to care for me herself. She slept on a couch in my room, and every time I stirred she was up. It seemed as though she was trying to draw me back to her by her devotion. For weeks I think she has felt I was not the same, that in some way I was drifting away from her. She does not suspect the real cause—but sooner or later she will."

"And if she should learn the truth?" breathed Margaret.

"If she should learn the truth—I don't know what she would do; I don't know. I'm afraid it would be something desperate. While I was sick I dreamed that they brought her home to me unconscious—dying. I saw them carrying her up the stairs. She had hurled herself in front of a train. Then I awoke to find her sitting close by my bed, reading. And it struck me as particularly pitiful that she had rouged her cheeks and wore her most elaborate negligée, as though to lure me back with those charms. And in spite of her efforts she looked so old and worn. And all the time I knew the certain wretchedness that I was bringing her in one form or another. Oh, it has all been ghastly!"

"No—no; listen, dear! You mustn't say that—that you are bringing her certain wretchedness. You know from the beginning we both said we would

make any sacrifice rather than let it ruin her life."

"We said that then, but now I know I could not do it. That was one of the things I realized while I was sick—that, whatever happened, I could not give you up." He drew her toward him with a fierce tenderness. "I know now that I never can."

And for the moment she forgot all their difficulties, all the complications that surrounded them, in the joy and sweetness of his love.

Just before he left he said hesitatingly:

"What shall we do, dear, about Sunday? You know we planned for a long drive, and I have been looking forward to it all these days. And now—Mrs. Whitman is insisting that I take her to Bronxville to spend Saturday and Sunday with her sister. She says the change will do us both good. I tried to make some excuse, but she is determined on the trip. What can I do? She is worn out with waiting on me, and really does need a change. I don't see how I can refuse to go, and yet it seems so hard to give up our outing. I don't think it has ever seemed quite so hard before."

"And she won't go without you?"

"That's the trouble; she won't go anywhere without me."

"Then, you will have to go with her. I understand how impossible it would be to refuse her this now. We can have our drive some other time." She tried to say it cheerfully.

But when he had gone, Margaret found herself dwelling on the thought that he had not wanted Mrs. Whitman to nurse him; she need not have worn herself out. He had insisted on having a nurse, and she had not permitted it. She had wanted to strengthen her claim, her sense of possession, which she felt had been slipping away.

And yet—could she blame her? Would she not do the same in her place? It was the primitive woman fighting for her mate. Many thoughts now forced themselves upon Margaret that she tried to shut out. She had not the courage to face them. She wanted

to get away from them and from herself.

With a sickening sense of her own weakness, she slipped down and knelt by her chair, and in her mind was a vague, unformulated prayer that in some way her love might be made *right*—that it might bring no unhappiness to this other woman. Could not such a love exist, a strong, pure love that asked only to love and be loved, without bringing misery to others?

Had fate given her this glimpse of the most beautiful thing that had ever come into her life, only that it might be renounced? Must she try to crush it out—to kill it? It would be like killing some living thing. Her brain ached with the burden of doubts and questions that pressed upon her.

V

MARGARET found herself more and more drawing away from the few people she knew and living only for the hours they spent together. In spite of his frequent assertion that, as he could be with her so little, he wished her to have all the diversion she could, he was intensely jealous of every other interest, however trivial, in her life.

If her telephone rang while he was there he would become silent and morose, and once he bitterly remarked that he was always being reminded of the attention showered on her by others. If he called unexpectedly and found her out, he would immediately infer that she was driving or dining with someone else.

Again and again she insisted that she would gladly give up what little social life she had. But to this he would not agree. He seemed never to realize the illogicalness of his attitude in persisting that she make no change in her social life, and yet becoming so bitter over every incident that resulted from it.

One afternoon he chanced to call while Mr. Kenton, the editor of a magazine for which Margaret often wrote, was there. She introduced them with

an easy grace, but her heart beat with misgiving. Mr. Kenton, unconscious of anything critical in the situation, carried the conversation along without effort. But Graham sat silent, his eyes dark with the rancor within him.

When Mr. Kenton had gone, Margaret stood dismayed before the fierce bitterness of his jealousy.

"Is it necessary to make a social friend of an editor? Simply because he publishes some of your work does not give him the right to call on you socially."

"He only called about those proofs. He has always been interested in my work."

"Proofs? Do you think I don't know that is a mere pretext? It is not your work he is interested in—but you! And he has even presumed to send you flowers."

"But that was when I was ill."

"What right has he to send you flowers at all?"

She made no reply. She felt the uselessness of any argument. He was in one of his unreasonable jealous moods, when nothing she could say or do would help. He was walking nervously up and down the room. At length he came over and drew her toward him.

"Oh, I know, dear—I know I am unreasonably jealous. But I can't help it. It is like hot irons searing my heart when I have to stand quietly by and see other men pay you attentions, other men who are free to offer everything, while I am tied and helpless." He clenched his hands. "It is intolerable! I feel that I am only standing in your way."

"Ah, don't say that—when you know—"

"But I have nothing to offer you—I can give you only stolen scraps of my time. I am bound hand and foot to a woman that I feel I can't desert. If she were a younger woman, or less dependent—But to desert her now, when her need for me is so great—it would be contemptible to leave her now. You could never respect me, and I could never respect myself. That would always be between us."

"Oh, no—no, you can't leave her. You told me that in the beginning, and I said you were right. I meant it then—and I still mean it; you must believe that I do!"

"You have been very sweet and brave about it, and very patient. But that does not alter the facts. It only makes me feel more keenly how weak I have been in accepting your generosity, in letting you give up your future for a man in my position."

"If only she were a woman to whom money would be a compensation, I would secure my freedom, sign over to her every cent I have and begin again to work for you. But she is not a mercenary woman—at least, not in that sense. No amount of money would compensate for a separation from me."

"And lately she has been so fearfully suspicious. She watches every move I make. I am constantly having to tell her small falsehoods. And I hate to lie!"

"But she knows nothing?" quiveringly.

"No, but she is beginning to notice a difference in me. I have tried very hard to be just the same to her in every way, but I find myself unconsciously trying to avoid her. The other night when I went home she came up to kiss me. I had just been thinking of you, and instinctively I shrank from her caress. She grew very pale. She said nothing at the time, but she watched me furtively all through dinner."

"After dinner she wanted to go to the theater. I was tired and worried, and I had hoped to be alone part of the evening that I might write to you. I felt I could not sit through one of those mawkish, sentimental plays she always selects. It seemed to me that the drama I was living was too real and too terrible to witness any weak travesty on life and love."

"I tried to make some excuse, but I saw she was hurt and displeased. I have sacrificed my own inclinations to hers for so long that now it is impossible to change my habits without arousing her keenest suspicions. If I had

done as other men, belonged to three or four clubs and spent half of my evenings away from home, it would not be so difficult now."

He had never talked so intimately of his life before. He was naturally a very reticent man, but now the desire to put everything before her that she might understand it all was stronger than his innate reserve, and he spoke with almost feverish eagerness.

"At college I was filled with an intense literary ambition. I was working on a book on social ethics in all my spare time. But after I married I gave it all up for her, except a few articles I wrote now and then at the office. She is not a literary woman in any sense, and she was jealous of the time I put on the book. She insisted that if I was at the office all day, I should devote my evenings to her.

"It makes me heartsick when I think of all those wasted years. I realize now that she has sapped the strength of my ambitions and dwarfed my whole mental life. It is not entirely her fault; I should have asserted my right to a certain amount of independent and individual life. But I began by yielding; I followed the line of least resistance. And then, too, I had the theory that if in this marriage I could not be happy myself, it was at least something to feel that I was making her happy. And I think her greatest happiness is in her sense of absolute ownership of me, in the satisfaction she derives from her feeling of possession."

He had ceased speaking; he was gazing out of the window with eyes that were full of a bitter despair. She wanted to comfort and help him, but she could think of nothing to say. She felt keenly her helplessness.

She knew he was growing to chafe more and more under the tyranny of his home life, and she was afraid of the gradual change in her own feeling. The sense of pity and sympathy she had felt at first for his wife was changing to one of resentment and antagonism. She realized the danger of that. She knew she must not encourage this attitude either in herself or in him.

She still shrank from the thought of building their happiness on another woman's misery. So now she only slipped her hand in his in silent sympathy. He covered it with both his own.

"How selfish I am to inflict all this on you! You have enough to bear without being burdened with my part of it. Poor little girl—and you bear it so patiently! And I have tried to keep you cooped up here away from everyone, on account of my morbid jealousy. But from now on I want you to have all the social pleasure and diversion you can. I don't think I shall hurt you about it again."

She smiled a little sadly. She had come to realize this weakness of his love. She knew that, whatever he might feel now, tomorrow or the next day he would be as blindly and unreasonably jealous as ever. In everything else he was absolutely fair-minded and just, but in this one thing his mind seemed perverted; he distorted and exaggerated and misconstrued the most trivial incident.

But in spite of all their difficulties and misunderstandings, they had many hours of uninterrupted happiness, when they both felt that life was giving them of its best—hours of tenderness and love and happy wanderings, when they seemed very near each other and strong enough in their love to triumph over any obstacles that might arise.

VI

BEFORE he spoke, Margaret knew that something had happened. He dropped his hat and gloves on a table and stood for several moments silently turning over a magazine. At length, without looking up, he said slowly:

"She knows. She heard me telephone you last night."

Margaret caught her breath, clasping tight the back of a chair. She made no attempt to question him. After a little he went on in the same low, quiet voice.

"She has been growing more and

more suspicious. For days I have felt that she was watching every move I made. And last night she came down in the hall and heard me telephone to you."

"Heard you?"

He smiled bitterly. "Yes, it seems that she was listening at the library door. The door was closed and I thought she was up in her room, but she came downstairs—and *listened*."

"How—how much did she hear?"

"About all that I said."

"And then?"

"Then she burst into the library and admitted that she had heard it all—that she had listened because she felt she had a right to listen. Oh, I can't tell you the rest—there was a pitiable scene. I never knew before that she was a hysterical woman."

"What did you say? What did you do?"

"I tried to soothe her. There was nothing else I could do. I tried to make her think she was mistaken, that she had misunderstood much of what I had said, that it had not the meaning she thought. Then she forced me to promise that I would never see you again."

"And you promised?"

"I had no choice. Of course, I knew I could not keep the promise when I made it. But she was desperate. I had to pacify her in any way I could."

There was a moment's silence, and then he added fiercely:

"I hate to lie! And I am being constantly forced into it now."

She was conscious of a swift sense of pain. She knew how he shrank from untruths and deceptions of every kind, and yet it was for her sake that they were continually forced upon him.

He threw down the magazine now and began walking up and down the room, as he often did in tense moments.

"Last night shattered a hope that I have been cherishing almost unconsciously for days. I had not yet mentioned it to you, but lately I have been hoping that, after all, it might be possible for me some time to tell her the truth—relying on her generosity to free

me. But I know now I could never tell her. She could not bear it. Her sense of control, of absolute ownership of me, is too strong—she could never give it up."

He came over beside her and drew her gently toward him.

"And now I am afraid I can't see you as often as I have—at least, not for a time. She is so fearfully suspicious just now. It is for your sake, too, dear. I want to shield you all I can. As yet she does not know your name and address."

"But that time I called—when you were sick! The maid gave her my card!"

"I know; I thought of that, but it seems that she has forgotten it or does not connect it with this."

"But you don't mean—you don't think she would come here, or do anything like that?"

"I don't know. I don't know now what she might not do. I didn't think she would listen at a door. But she did that. I suppose a jealous woman will do anything."

"But she is not a vindictive woman?"

"She never has been."

There was a long pause, and then Margaret asked hesitatingly:

"And now—we shall have to give up our drive and dinner Saturday?"

"I'm afraid so. She is insisting that I take her to Lakewood for a week or ten days."

"A week or ten days! And—you—are going?"

"I don't see how I can avoid it. We always go every spring about this time, but this year I have been putting it off from week to week. And now she insists on going Saturday. If I refuse, it will only confirm her suspicions. But I shall not stay ten days, dear, nor even a week. To pacify her, I will go for a few days and then find some excuse—some business engagement that will make it necessary for me to return."

When he was leaving he saw tears in her eyes. He came back and took both her hands in his.

"Do you want me to stay, dear?"

Shall I risk it and refuse to go? I will if you feel that I should."

"Oh, no—no! It will only make things more difficult if you do not go. After all, it is only for a few days. I am afraid we are both getting very weak if we can't bear such a short separation."

"I know," he answered despairingly. "It seems that I haven't the strength or courage that I used to have. I just want *you*, dear—I want you with me all the time, and I don't seem to have the heart to struggle with conditions that keep us separated."

He was to leave at four o'clock the next day. He had wanted to come up at one and take her to luncheon. But she instinctively felt that the luncheon would not be a happy one. They would both be depressed, and it would only make it more difficult for him to go. In many ways she felt it would be better not to see him again before he left. So she told him to call her up at half past three and tell her good-bye over the telephone just before he started.

But the next morning she was restless and unhappy. After all, why had she not let him take her to luncheon? It could make her no more unhappy than she already was. She wanted to see him. Just to see and talk to him for a few moments would be something. The desire to telephone him to come for her was very strong, but she did not yield to it. Instead, she determined to go out, to do some shopping, anything to get away from herself and her thoughts until it was too late for luncheon. She would stay out until three o'clock—until just time to receive his good-bye message.

She drove to one of the big shops and wandered around aimlessly. What was it that she wanted? The toilet counter was before her, and she remembered she needed some dentifrice.

All the clerks were busy. While she waited she glanced listlessly over the lavish display of dainty bottles and boxes, the innumerable preparations for toilet and bath. The air was heavy with the mingled odors of soap and per-

fumes. In front of her a clerk was deftly adding up a list of items on her salesbook.

"Four dollars and sixty-nine cents. You wish these charged?"

"Yes, they are to be charged and sent special. I want them by three o'clock. You have the right address—Mrs. Graham Whitman, 197 West Seventy-third Street. And you will not fail to send them special?"

She was standing so close beside Margaret that her dress brushed against her as she passed.

For a few moments Margaret stood motionless, and then turned blindly and left the shop. A fierce, sickening jealousy clutched at her throat. "Mrs. Graham Whitman"—that was her name! She was his wife; she had a right to that name. And she was buying these things to take on this trip with him—with *him*! Margaret lashed herself with the torturing thoughts of all the intimacy and close companionship of traveling, of life at a resort hotel, where he would be with her constantly.

"Mrs. Graham Whitman"—it was only her imagination, of course, and yet it seemed as if there had been a note of triumph, of the exultancy of possession, as she gave the name. "Mrs. Graham Whitman"—oh, it rang with such intimacy!

When she reached her apartment it was just two o'clock. Without stopping to consider the wisdom of her impulse, she yielded to an uncontrollable desire and telephoned him to come to her before he left.

He came at once, anxious, loving, for even over the telephone he had detected a sob in her voice. She threw herself in his arms with an incoherent account of the incident.

"And she gave your name—your name—'Mrs. Graham Whitman'! If she had only said 'Mrs. Mary Whitman,' or even 'Mrs. G. K. Whitman'—but 'Mrs. *Graham* Whitman'! Oh, she said it as though she were a *part* of you! And she had the things charged—the bill will go to you. Oh, don't misunderstand me—you know I don't mean—"

"I know what you mean, dear. And lately I have had the same feeling. I have wanted to put half of my property in her name so she would have her own income. But she has fought against it. She has always said she loved to feel that I was paying for all her personal needs; that she never wanted an income of her own; that it was *my* money she wanted to feel that she was spending—not *hers*. She has always been like that—always used every incident, every detail of life, to make our relationship seem more close, more intimate and binding."

"Oh, I'm so sorry it happened; I'm so sorry I met her. It has only increased a feeling that has been growing upon me lately. The sympathy and consideration I used to have for her have almost all gone—and now—now—"

"I know, dear—I know," he murmured sadly.

VII

"I DIDN'T know you had a new secretary."

"A new secretary? Why, I haven't. What made you think that?"

"This afternoon I telephoned to your office and a woman answered. She said you were out, but that she was your secretary, and asked me to leave my name and message."

"What time was that?"

"About three o'clock."

"And did you leave any message?"

"No; I just said for you to call up Miss Warren when you came in."

"Did she ask for your telephone number?"

"Yes."

"And you gave it?" tensely.

"Yes. I said you knew it; but she insisted, so I repeated it. Why, dear, what is the matter? What makes you look like that?"

"That was—Mrs. Whitman."

"Oh, no—no! It couldn't have been!"

"She was there between three and four. I came in a little after four, and Matthews said she had just gone."

"And I gave her my name and number!"

"You only hastened things by perhaps a few days. For weeks she has been determined to find out who you are. I knew she would succeed sooner or later—it had to come."

"But how could she claim to be your secretary when Mr. Matthews was there?"

"It seems that she sent Matthews out on some trivial errand. When I learned that, I felt she had done it purposely, that she had come down with the intention of going through my desk. She knew I would be at a committee meeting this afternoon."

"Would she do that? Would she go through your private papers?"

"She would never have done it before. But I think now in her desperate jealousy she would do almost anything. But your letters are safe. While I keep them in my desk, they are in a drawer for which I had a special lock made. That you should telephone while she was there and Matthews was out was, of course, an accident of which she was quick to take advantage. And now that she knows your telephone number, she can easily get the address from Central."

"But will that prove anything? You have many women clients."

"Yes, but she has only to come here and inquire of the clerk to learn that I have been calling here for months. If she can't get the information from the clerk, it would not be difficult to bribe the bellboys. There are a dozen ways she can find out now."

"Would she come here and bribe the bellboys?"

He flushed slightly at the note of scorn in her voice.

"Perhaps not herself. But there are detective agencies all over the city that do just that kind of work."

"A detective? And you think—"

For several moments he stood moodily studying a design in the rug. Then he said slowly:

"We must do everything we can to avert a crisis now. I am in no position to tell her the truth or leave her now."

If I had done it six months ago it would not have been quite so horrible, but now—now—” He turned quickly and walked toward the window.

Margaret rose and went over beside him.

“What is it, dear? You are keeping something from me—I have felt it for weeks. Tell me what it is. Tell me, dear, and let me help you.”

“No, you have enough to bear. You can do nothing, and it will only make it harder for you.”

“Tell me—you must tell me! You make me feel that you are shutting me out of your life, of the little part of your life that I *can* share.”

“Not this—I can’t tell you this. I must fight it out alone.”

“Don’t you trust me? Don’t you trust me, Graham?” She was sobbing now. “I can bear anything but the feeling that you don’t trust me—that you are drawing away from me.”

“You know it is not that. I had only hoped to spare you pain and worry. But if you put it that way, I will tell you, of course.”

He hesitated and then said slowly:

“Whatever happens, I could not leave her now, for she would be penniless. In the last six months I have lost about fifty thousand dollars—practically everything I had.”

In an instant she was clinging to him, murmuring words of tenderest love and comfort, covering his eyes and forehead with kisses. All the mother love that is a part of every woman was aroused in her now. He was in trouble—in sore distress; he needed her love and sympathy as he had never needed it before, and she gave it to him without reservation. The shyness she usually felt in any voluntary caress was not with her now. She was conscious only of a great yearning to help him, to make him forget all worry and trouble in the tenderness of her love.

“I shall never forget, dear, that your first instinct was to comfort me—not to question or blame, but just to comfort. Do you know, you haven’t yet asked me how it happened.”

“I don’t think I thought of that.”

“I lost it in stocks—in speculating—something I have not done for years. I felt that, if we should ever begin life together, I should not want it to be on the money I had earned while I was with her; that if ever I left her, I should want to give her everything I had made during the years we had been married.

“And for our possible future together I opened an entirely new account at the Mercantile Bank, hoping to build it up by extra work outside my regular practice. But I grew impatient; I wanted to increase it more rapidly, so I made several ventures in stocks. That was just before the panic in September. When that came on I lost heavily. To retrench my losses I went in still deeper. I was desperate. I felt that, in one sense, it was her money I had lost, and I must make it back. Then I lost again and still again. Oh, I can’t talk about it—”

“Listen, dear. I have some money, not very much—but a few thousands. Let me—”

He put her from him roughly. “Do you think I would touch your money?”

“But I want to help you. It would make me happier than anything else in the world.”

“You can help me, but not in that way. You can help by being patient and cheerful. I won’t be able to be with you as often as I have been; we shall have to give up a great deal. For I must work—I *must* give more time to my work now than I have ever given before. There is no way to make back this money but through my practice.”

“And she does not know of—of this loss?”

“No, and I must keep it from her. She would worry herself ill if she knew.”

It came to Margaret with a sickening sense of oppression that she had been the cause of all this. Had it not been for her, for his hope of their future together, he would not have felt the need to make these investments, and would not now be facing these difficulties. The loss of his entire fortune, the work of many years—aside

from his anxiety about his wife—what would it mean to him? What effect would it have on his life? Even though he did not now, might he not some day blame her for the part, however innocent, she had had in it all?

The long silence that had fallen upon them was broken by a clock striking the half-hour.

"Half past six! I must go, dear. I mustn't be late for dinner tonight—it would only make matters worse."

After he had gone she sat by the window brooding over the hopelessness of it all. How would it end? Could they ever extricate themselves from the obstacles that were thickening around them? What would be the result of the loss of this money? She had a presentiment that it would mean a great deal; that, while he was in no way a mercenary man, the loss of his fortune would tend to humiliate him, to decrease his self-confidence and assurance.

The next morning she received this note:

Had a serious time when I reached home last night. She had already found out your address and knew that I had been calling there constantly. Threatened to kill herself if I ever saw you again. This morning she is still hysterical. I must do what I can to pacify her. It will be impossible for me to see you for several days. Try to be brave and patient, dear; that will help me more than anything else—and I need help now.

After the first shock and distress of the letter, a glow of love and self-sacrifice swept over her. She *would* be brave and patient. She would make no demands on him now.

She answered the note at once, saying that all her love and sympathy went out to him, that she knew he had much to contend with now and that he should not be worried or distressed about her in any way. Even if she could not see him for several days, she would try to be contented and cheerful. And if it was difficult for him to send her messages, she would not misunderstand his silence. She would do all she could to help him in this way, as she knew of no other—and above everything else, she wanted to help him.

No further message came that day. The next morning there was still no word. He might, at least, have telephoned! She tried in vain to crush down the sense of hurt and neglect. It was not until three days later that he telephoned. He was at once conscious of the coldness and formality in her voice.

"You wrote me you would not misunderstand my silence."

"What makes you think I have?"

"Your voice. You are hurt and indignant because I took you at your word."

"Not at all," still coldly.

"Do you think you are being fair? You promised to help me—to try to be brave and cheerful. I am surrounded with all kinds of difficulties, and now you are going to make things harder by making me feel that I have offended you. Shall I risk everything and come to see you this afternoon?"

"Oh, no, no—not if it will make things more difficult."

"It will. But rather than have you feel hurt and neglected, I will come."

"No, I don't want you to do that. I know you should not take any risks now. And since you have telephoned I will be more content. It was only because I didn't hear from you at all that I felt hurt." There was a tremulous note in her voice now.

"Poor little girl! It has been hard, I know. It would help us both, I think, if I could see you for a few moments. It would be perfectly safe if we could meet somewhere—just so I do not come to your hotel. Would you feel hurt if I should ask you to do that—to meet me somewhere for a few moments?"

"Why should I feel hurt?"

"You are so sensitive—I am always afraid of hurting you. I thought you might feel humiliated if I asked you to meet me at a Subway station."

"I will meet you anywhere—I think you ought to know that."

"Will you?" Even over the telephone she felt the glad note in his voice. "Will you come at once—say in about three-quarters of an hour—

to the Thirty-third Street station? I shall be waiting for you there."

She hung up the receiver. In three-quarters of an hour—she was to see him in three-quarters of an hour! She slipped into a street suit with eager happiness. The slight aversion she had always had for the Subway was now changed to a warm liking and gratitude as it whirled her toward him. At the Thirty-third Street station he was there on the platform, waiting to help her off. For a second he held both her hands.

"It was good of you to come, Margaret."

"And you thought I would feel humiliated to meet you in this way?"

"I didn't know. You are sensitive about so many things."

"But I would do anything to see you. Oh, I have wanted so to see you!" Her lips trembled.

"Margaret! My poor darling!" he murmured as he bent toward her.

"What has happened? Tell me! Oh, I have been so worried!"

"I can't talk about it—don't ask me, Margaret. It has all been so wretched."

"Oh, you must tell me—you must! It will worry me sick if you don't—I have been imagining all kinds of dreadful things."

It was several moments before he spoke, and then she felt it was with an effort.

"It seems that day she was down at the office she found out more than I thought. The drawer in which I keep your letters, the one with the special lock, she, of course, could not open. But in the drawer underneath she found a letter that in some way had slipped down from the locked drawer. I suppose in opening and closing the drawer this letter got caught in the back and fell through."

"One of my letters?" breathlessly.

"No. The strange part of it is that it was one of mine!"

"One of yours!"

"Yes, an unfinished one. I remember one day while I was writing you a client came in, and I locked the letter

in the drawer with yours. And it was that unfinished note that fell through into the drawer below."

"What was it? What had you written?"

"It was one of the most unfortunate things she could have found. It was about the time you were so ill, and was full of anxiety and solicitude about your health and regret that I could not be with you constantly. There was no name or address, so I tried to make her believe that it was merely a letter I had copied, a letter given me by a client as part of the testimony in a divorce case. She knows I never handle cases of that kind, but for the sake of her pride she is trying to make a pretense at believing it."

"Oh, I am so sorry it happened! But why did she do that? Why did she go through your desk? Does she not feel that it was a most contempt—that it was not an honorable thing to do?"

"Yes, she feels that keenly. She says she knows it was a contemptible thing; her only justification is the same as when she listened at the telephone—that I drove her to it; that she felt she must know the truth. And that same afternoon she found your address and learned how often I had been calling there. She even knew that I was there that very afternoon."

"How could she know that?"

"She would not give me the particulars. But I suppose, having your telephone number, she got the address from Information and then at once sent a detective to the hotel. I may even have been there when he came."

"Oh, how dreadful! It cheapens it all so. It makes me feel— Oh, it is all so humiliating!"

"I know—I feel that, too. Yesterday it seemed almost unbearable. That is one reason I did not want to tell you. But you see now how imperative it is that I do not come to the hotel. It is best not even to write or telephone you there unless it is absolutely necessary. It is for your sake, dear—to shield you. It almost maddens me when I think how little protection I

can give you—and it must be only negative. I can shield you only by remaining away from you."

"Do you mean that I am not to see you or hear from you at all?"

"Only for a few days. I know that neither of us could stand that long, but just until I have time to arrange things. I thought of getting a lock post office box for each of us; in that way our mail, at least, would be safe."

"It isn't safe now?"

"I don't know. It may be, but for your sake I don't want to take any risks."

An express train thundered by, almost drowning his voice.

"I am afraid I have been very thoughtless in keeping you standing here so long. Come up and let me get a cab to take you home. I don't like to think of your going back alone on the Subway; it will be very crowded now."

As he led her up the steps and across the street toward a line of cabs, she was filled with a sick disappointment. She had thought he would take her to some hotel reception room or restaurant—some place where they could be together for a little while. Was she only to see him for these few moments? She wanted to speak of it, to make some suggestion, but her pride kept her silent. Perhaps he had read something of her thoughts, for, as he put her in a cab, he said longingly:

"If I could only keep you with me for a while longer—but I promised to be home at five."

There was a conscious pause, and then he asked hesitatingly:

"Margaret, would you come here again at the same time day after tomorrow? You must know how I hate to ask this of you, but it is the only way I can safely see you now."

"I will come gladly, dear. I haven't the feeling about it that you seem to think. I should have, of course, under any other circumstances. But since I know it is impossible now for you to come to me, there is nothing I would not do to be with you, if only for a few moments."

"Margaret!" His lingering hand-clasp was like a caress. And as the cab moved off and left him standing there, she felt her heart go out to him in a rush of love and of infinite pity for all the difficulties that, because of her, were now surrounding him.

VIII

THE next few weeks were filled with clandestine meetings—at Subway and Elevated stations, at banks and drug stores, stolen moments of evasions and subterfuge that hurt them both, that put a sense of degradation upon their love that had never been there before.

She could no longer protest that she did not feel the humiliation of it all. She felt it keenly, but always the longing to see him was stronger than everything else.

She watched with dread his growing moodiness and depression. Their old hours of happiness and light-heartedness were entirely gone. They were weighed down now by conditions that seemed daily to grow more unbearable.

Margaret's own suffering had hardened her to the suffering of his wife. Since the incident of the telephone, she realized how radically her feelings had changed. Where before she had felt both sympathy and consideration, she now felt only bitter antagonism. And more and more frequently this bitterness and jealousy found expression in words.

It seemed to her that the depths of misery and abasement had been reached when one day she recklessly taunted him with lack of courage, of the courage of his love, saying that if he really loved her he would have long ago given up everything for her and saved them both all this anguish. And he answered that love should not mean cruelty and wreckage; that even for her he could not forget entirely what he owed that poor woman who was his wife. He had wronged her enough.

It was the first time she had expressed in any way the wish that he would leave his wife. Immediately

she tried to recall the words, saying that she did not mean them, that she was nervous and overwrought.

"I know," he said sadly. "I do not blame you. If you have grown bitter and resentful toward her, it is my fault. For months I have talked of her, have told you all her faults and weaknesses. I am thoroughly ashamed of all that I have said. And now we have come to think of her as our enemy. That is fatal; we must not encourage that feeling."

But unconsciously, or because they could not help it, the feeling was encouraged. His resolve never again to speak of his wife in any way that would increase their hostility toward her was broken only a few days later, when they met for one of their stolen half-hours. Margaret had come to know in a glance when anything had happened; but she had also learned never to try to force his confidence.

At first he talked only of generalities, trying to keep from a subject that he knew was dangerous for them both. But at length he broke out in uncontrolled bitterness.

"I can't stand this much longer. All day yesterday I was hounded—literally hounded. And I suppose when I go home this evening it will be the same thing."

She was silent. She had found that when he was in these moods any comments or questions had only a tendency to make him draw back within himself. They seemed to bring him to a consciousness of what he was saying, and had the effect of checking any confidences of this kind.

"As yesterday was Sunday, she wanted me to take her to Bronxville to her sister's. I shrank from a day of family gossip just now, so I made some excuse. Then she wanted to go to East Orange or to half a dozen other places she suggested. And I felt that, if I couldn't be with you, I might, at least, have a quiet day alone in my study. But she was insistent that I should take her somewhere. When finally I told her I did not wish to go out, she became very angry and said

I never wanted to take her anywhere any more, that she knew I was planning to see you, and that she did not intend to tolerate it much longer. I did not answer her. I went into the library and closed the door.

"For the rest of the day she watched every move I made. When I went to the corner to get some cigars, I happened to glance up and saw her at one of the upper windows leaning far out to see which way I went. And when I came back she accused me of having sent some message to you.

"And then, while we were at luncheon, the telephone rang. Susan, the maid, answered it and said it was someone to speak to me. I left the table and went up to the library. It was only a client, who had returned to town and wanted to make an appointment for today. It took such a few seconds, evidently so much less than she thought, that she did not have time to get away, for when I came out I found her listening at the door. She had followed me upstairs from the dining room, thinking it was you who had telephoned. That makes the second time she has done that.

"I did not say a word, but she must have seen the contempt in my face. She burst into tears and said what she had said before: that that was what I had driven her to; that I knew she had never done such things, but now she couldn't help it. It sickened me—the whole thing sickened me."

"But you don't feel that you are to blame? You don't think she was justified in—"

"That is the worst of it—I *do* feel that. She is right; I have driven her to this. It seems pitiable that our love should bring humiliation and loss of self-respect to three people."

"Ah, don't say that!"

"It is true. Don't you think I know how all these weeks of clandestine meetings have hurt you? And I am being daily forced into lies and petty deceptions of all kinds."

"Then you mean—you mean that our love is wrong?"

"I don't know. I only know that,

so far, it has brought only suffering to us all."

"And you can say that, when you have the memory of all our wonderful hours together—golden hours! Have you forgotten those?"

He was silent.

The sense of a great dread and foreboding filled Margaret's heart. Was this the beginning of the end? Would all these difficulties and humiliations at last make him revolt at the love that had caused them? She thought of his financial loss, the loss of almost his entire fortune, and of all the distress that had come to him through her, indirectly, of course, but still through her. A man's love? After all, what did she know of a man's love? The feeling of permanency and security she had felt in his love—what had she based it on? How could she know that it would be strong enough to last through continued suffering and hardships?

"Forgive me, dear. I should not worry you with all this. You have enough to bear as it is. I think I felt unusually depressed today, or I should not have done it. Put it all aside; try to forget it. We shall find some way out of it all yet."

But she knew the note of cheerfulness was forced, and she went home with the sense of dread still heavy within her.

With restless, almost feverish, eagerness, she looked forward to their next meeting, hoping it would help her, that he would be different, more like he used to be, that in some way he would lighten this feeling of gloom that was over her. And yet how often lately she had looked forward to their meetings with this same hope, only to come away more despondent than ever!

It was just two minutes of four the next afternoon when she reached the Subway station. She was a little surprised and hurt to find that he was not already there. While the appointment was for four o'clock, he had always made it a rule to be several minutes early. She could not recall a time in which he had not been there first; he had often said he never wanted to have

her wait for him—that humiliation, at least, he could spare her.

Four o'clock! Five—ten—twenty minutes after! Her feelings alternated between anxiety and indignation. But, as train after train passed and did not bring him, she forgot her resentment in a sick fear and apprehension. In an agony of suspense, she watched the crowd pour out from every train as the guards swung back the gates. There seemed to her something sinister in all these strange faces among which she could not find his.

Something had happened! Should she go back to her apartment, where he could reach her by telephone? There was no way he could get any message to her here. The clock over the ticket agent's window pointed now to a quarter of five. She would wait for one more train.

She caught a glimpse of her face in the glass of the slot machine. How pale she was! The girl behind the news stand was watching her curiously. She walked to the far end of the platform. By leaning forward she could see the red lights of a train speeding toward her through the black, gaping tunnel. A moment later it had drawn up by the platform. The gates were open. He was not there! And then she saw him coming toward her, hurrying from the last car.

After the first throb of joy and relief, all her indignation returned. She did not move to meet him.

"I am sorry to be late," he said quietly.

Margaret caught her breath. She had expected the most profuse apologies and regrets. He said nothing more. In silence he led her up out of the Subway and through a quiet street.

At length she turned to him, her face burning hotly.

"And that is all? You kept me waiting there almost an hour—and you have no explanations?"

"None that you would consider adequate. I might invent one," bitterly. "I am being constantly forced into lying to her, but I had hoped that I might continue to tell you the truth."

"I don't think I understand," coldly. "Do you mean that it was possible for you to have prevented this?"

"It was possible—yes."

She knew this mood; she had seen much of it lately. It was a sort of defiant bitterness that he had come to assume when the difficulties of his position weighed too heavily upon him, when he felt too keenly his helplessness. That his heart was full of the deepest pain and remorse for having subjected her to this long wait in a public place, she knew; and that, whatever he might say, his delay had been unavoidable, she also knew. She felt now that he had been detained by *her*, for some trivial thing that he was helpless to prevent, and it was that fact that had so embittered him.

Her resentment suddenly vanished before a finer understanding and sympathy, as she laid her hand on his arm and said gently:

"It is all right, dear. You need make no excuse or explanation. In a way, I think I understand."

Instantly his expression changed to one of quivering tenderness.

"Do you mean that, Margaret—that you are willing to put this aside without any explanation at all, to believe it was unavoidable without knowing why, without even my assertion that it was?"

"Yes."

Then he stooped over her with the tone and words she so loved to hear, and that he used only when most deeply moved:

"Margaret, dear little Margaret!"

And in that moment she felt nearer to him than she had for days. There was a long, intimate silence; then he said slowly:

"But I want to explain it—I owe you that. It is the least I can do."

"No, no—not if for any reason you would rather not."

"I think now I would rather tell you. I suppose you know who it was that kept me?"

"Yes, I know now."

"She came down to the office about half past three and wanted me to go

with her to have a ring reset. I told her I was sorry, but that I had an appointment at four. Something in my manner and my failure to tell her what the appointment was must have aroused her suspicions, for she became very insistent. The jeweler was around on Maiden Lane, and I thought I would have time to go with her and still meet you at four. But she seemed to resent my haste, and when we got over there did everything she could to detain me. At the last moment she decided to have two more stones added to the setting, and forced me to remain and help select them. I felt that she was doing it purposely, that she believed I had an engagement with you and was determined to delay me. She managed the situation so I could not leave without being deliberately rude to her before the clerk. And I could not do that."

"No—of course not," she murmured, trying to force back the indignation that was again rising within her. And that was why she had waited three-quarters of an hour at a Subway station? He had been selecting jewels for *her*!

"Now you are hurt. It would have been better if I had taken you at your word and not explained. You think I should have left at any risk."

"I did not say that."

"No, it was not necessary. I knew my explanation would seem wholly inadequate to you; it does to me. And yet, if it were to happen again in the same way I could not do differently. But I see now that I should have lied to you, that I should have invented some accident, something that would have made it physically impossible for me to get here. That would have saved your sense of pride. I don't know why I didn't, except that I always want to tell you the truth. I feel that when we begin to lie to each other we shall have nothing left."

IX

THE house was dark except for a faint light in the hall. He looked at his watch. It was half past one. He had

spent the evening with Margaret, who for several days had not been well, and whose need of him seemed greater than ever. After leaving her he had taken a long, wandering walk. Stronger than usual was his reluctance to meet the questions and suspicions that awaited him at home.

And now, late as it was, he went back into the library, turned on the shaded light, drew up an easy chair and reached for cigars and matches. He felt he could not go upstairs just yet; the possibility of finding her still awake, of having to listen to complaints and reproaches, was one he could not meet just then. He wanted to be alone with his thoughts of Margaret.

Tonight he had felt her love, her clinging dependence, her need of him, as he had never felt them before. There had been something in the appeal of her weakness that had stirred the deepest tenderness of his love. He realized now, with keen anxiety, how wan and thin she had grown. And he knew it was the wearing strain of all these months, of the difficulties of their position, the anxieties, the constant dread of some impending crisis; it had told upon her sadly.

It seemed to him now that he must find some way to be with her at once, to care for her and make her well and strong again. At that moment his duty seemed to be clearly to *her*—to take his place beside her, to shield and protect her at any cost.

And yet, as he glanced around the room, the claims of his wife reasserted themselves. His wife's picture on the desk before him, another on the mantel—everything spoke of her and her claim.

There was a sound of steps on the stairs in the hall. The curtains were pushed aside and she stood in the library door clad only in her nightgown.

"Why, Mary, I thought you were asleep!" with a feeble disingenuousness for which he hated himself.

"You know very well I could not sleep, that I can never sleep, when you stay out late like this."

"Don't you think that is very foolish? Wouldn't it be better if you did?" He rose and threw a smoking jacket, which lay on the couch, around her shoulders. "You will take cold that way."

"Would you care if I did? Does it make any difference what happens to me now?" bitterly.

"If you are going to commence that, I think you had better go back upstairs."

"No; I want to talk to you. That is what I came down for. You were with that woman tonight—I know it! How much longer do you think I can stand this? How much longer do you think any wife would stand it—knowing that her husband went out day after day with some other woman—a *disreputable* woman?"

She saw the lines around his mouth grow tense, and it goaded her on. "Yes, a disreputable—a bad, fast woman, or she wouldn't go with another woman's husband."

He was looking steadily before him, but the hand that held his cigar trembled.

"Why don't you answer me?"

He did not move nor speak.

"Why don't you answer me?" she repeated fiercely, her voice rising in her excitement.

"I have nothing to say when you talk in that way—surely you must know that."

For a moment she looked at him helplessly, then threw herself on the couch in a passion of tears.

"Oh, I know it is because I said she was bad! You love her! She has thrown some hateful infatuation about you. And you are deserting your wife, who has been faithful to you for all these years, for a woman like that. Oh, I can't stand it—I can't! I shall kill myself if you don't give her up!"

When her sobs gradually lost their note of fierce anger and became deep and piteous, he laid aside his cigar and came slowly toward her. He touched her arm awkwardly, and there was a forced gentleness in his voice.

"This is all needless, Mary. You

work yourself up into these passions for no cause. You bring it all on yourself. If you would try to control your unreasonable jealousy we would both be much happier."

"You mean—that you don't—love her?" she cried, with a pitiful touch of hope. As she raised her swollen, tear-blotched face, he loathed himself for the feeling of almost physical repulsion that swept over him, and because of it he brought a note of real tenderness into his voice.

"Why, of course not." He tried to smile. "Do you think, after all these years we have lived together, that I am likely to fall in love with anyone now?"

She looked at him, half believing, longing to be convinced, and yet feeling that it was not true. In her scant nightgown, which painfully exposed the bones of her neck and only half hid the angular lines of her figure, with her tear-bleared eyes and swollen face, she had never seemed so unlovely. With a feeling of mingled pity and delicacy, instinctively he averted his gaze. Perhaps she felt something of what was in his mind, for suddenly, with an inarticulate cry, she threw herself against him, clinging to him in mute appeal.

He put his arm about her and soothed her as best he could. He even kissed her on the forehead, hating himself for the inward shrinking that he could not control. After a few moments she drew away and, still sobbing, went back upstairs. When he heard the door of her room close after her he sank on a chair by the desk, his head in his hands.

For almost an hour he sat there, motionless. When he rose and went upstairs his face was worn and haggard. No sound came from her room, and the transom over the door was dark. He moved softly about, lest he awaken her. But when he turned off his own light and lay gazing at the wavering shadows on the wall, reflected from the lights of the street, he caught the faint sound of a muffled sob—another—and still another. They did not seem to come from her room.

He rose and tapped on her door, but there was no answer. Then he pushed

the door open. In the darkness he could faintly discern the bed, undisturbed in its white smoothness—she was not there!

He switched on the lights in the hall and ran up to the third story. The sobs grew plainer. In one of the spare rooms he found her, lying on the bed, her face to the wall. She started up with a cry when she heard him.

"Why did you come up here?" he asked gently.

She sobbed some indistinct reply. And then he lay down beside her and threw his arm over her shoulder.

"I am going to stay here with you now; try to sleep."

Perhaps she felt that words would not help them, that he was giving her the best he could, all that was now in his power, for she said nothing more. Until dawn he lay there awake. The wretchedness of his position had never seemed so great; his treachery to this woman, who was his wife, had never seemed so despicable. He was wrecking the lives of two women—two women who loved him and depended upon him for their happiness. And he was failing them both. But what could he do? How could he now put either of them out of his life? And yet, to go on in this way meant only misery for all three. Sooner or later he would have to choose—he would have to sacrifice one.

X

STANDFORD'S MAGAZINE,
Editorial Rooms,
September 7, 1909.

DEAR MISS WARREN:

In the hope that now at the last moment you may reconsider your decision and allow us to use your name as the author of "The Immutable," we are holding the magazine open until the messenger returns.

As we have told you in a previous letter, we consider this the best story you have written. It is because of its strength and brevity that we have rushed it through into this number, although the magazine was already made up and we had to take out another article to make room for it. And it seems to us extremely whimsical, not to say foolish, to issue it under any other name than your own.

The magazine goes to press at once, but we can still change the name in the table of contents and on the title page if you will instruct us by the messenger to do so.

Very truly yours,

J. M. ARNOLD,

Editor.

The boy was waiting in the hall. Twice she read the letter and then drew some notepaper toward her.

DEAR MR. ARNOLD:

I will yield to your request; you may publish the story under my own name. I had no other reason for my wish to assume a pseudonym in this story except the desire to know what a few people would think of my work when they did not know it was mine—a reason that I now feel is wholly inadequate. But as you are probably accustomed by long suffering to the vagaries of authors, I trust you will not think too severely of this.

Most sincerely,

MARGARET WARREN.

Without waiting to reread it, she inclosed the note in an envelope. As she crossed over to the door the stillness of the room was insistent. And as the boy reached out his hand for the envelope, there was to her something almost sinister in the act; even his careless, good-natured face loomed up ominously before her. She watched him down the hall and heard the click of the elevator door as it closed after him.

It had gone—her consent to the use of her own name to *that* story. The magazine was going to press. On the eighteenth it would be on every news stand in the country. The eighteenth—twelve more days!

Her glance fell on the telephone. She could still stop it. Tomorrow would be too late; it would have passed through then. But now—there was yet time.

But she made no motion toward the telephone. Then suddenly it came to her with a hideous certainty that all along, in her heart, she had wanted it published under her own name. She had been only deceiving herself when she feigned otherwise.

She thought of the night she had written it, the night she had worked feverishly until morning, oblivious of weariness or need of sleep, swept on by

the force of the story. It was built upon what he had told her of his wife; she had used his very words, haunting, compelling, in their naked truth.

The next day she had read it over with a feeling almost of terror—it rang so true. That she should have used his confidence in this way! It was a flagrant betrayal of his trust. It must never be published—she had told herself that again and again.

And yet within a week she had sent the manuscript to *Standford's*, assuaging her conscience by the condition that it be published under a pseudonym. And now she had withdrawn even that! In twelve days the story would stand before the public under her own name.

To the public it would be only an interesting, well written story. But to the man who loved and had trusted her, when he saw the details of the most intimate struggles of his life laid bare in a story—what would it mean to him? And to his wife—when she read of his love for another woman, the woman who had written that story—what would it mean to her?

Published under another name, the story might never be seen by either of them, and if it were, it would be construed as merely a strange coincidence. But under her own name—what would be the result? What misery and wreckage might it not bring to them all?

There was still time to recall her consent; she could still stop the use of her name. The messenger had not yet reached the office. She flew to the telephone.

"3834 Madison."

As she waited for the number the doorbell rang suddenly. Again it rang—a loud, persistent ring. She dropped the receiver and turned impatiently to the door. It was another messenger with a note addressed in *his* writing. Unmindful of the receiver dangling from the telephone, she tore open the envelope.

Fate seems to be against us. Am afraid we'll have to give up the Opera this evening. Last night, while I was asleep, someone

found the tickets in my pocket. She denies this—claims she found them on the floor—that they had fallen out. But as they were in my inside vest pocket, I hardly think that possible.

She accused me bitterly of intending to take you, so there was nothing to do but say I had bought them for her and forgotten to speak of it. And now I shall have to take her—there is no other way.

A blinding jealousy swept over her. The telephone was ringing. She turned back toward it.

"Hello—hello!" Central was calling angrily. "Didn't you call 3834 Madison?"

"Yes—but it was a mistake. I don't want them now." And Margaret threw up the receiver.

The next few days were filled with a brooding dread. As the eighteenth, the day of issue, drew near, Margaret grew more and more nervous and apprehensive.

The only reparation she could make now was to tell him of the story before it came out, so that he might try to keep it from his wife. But she had not the courage to tell him; she shrank from it with increasing fear. What effect might it not have on his already depressed and moody condition to know that she had embodied some of the most intimate and painful details of his life in a story? Might he not even doubt the sincerity of her love, when she could use these things for material? With his own reticent and secretive nature, could he ever understand such a betrayal of his confidence? Could she ever make him understand that the story had written itself—that it had seemed a thing outside of her control? And even if she could make him realize how it had been written, could he ever understand or forgive its publication?

It was not until the sixteenth, just two days before the date of issue, that she at length forced herself to tell him. It was late in the afternoon; he had called for a few moments on his way home from the office. She told him simply without any effort at justification and without reservations, the de-

tails of the story and of its coming publication.

She kept her eyes fixed on an envelope which she had picked up from the desk and which she tore into thin strips as she spoke. When she finished there was a long silence. Still she did not look up; she was piecing the strips together again.

"You hate me! You think it a despicable thing! Oh, I know—I know—" Her voice broke to a sob.

"No," he answered quietly. "Six months ago I might, but now, before the evidence of my own weakness, I cannot blame you for yours. I could not blame *her*, even when I knew she had gone through my desk, opened my letters and listened at the library door. Formerly she would have been utterly incapable of such things, but now—" He paused. "I have come to believe that love and jealousy can change one's whole nature."

There was another silence, which she made no attempt to break.

"As for the magazine reaching her, I do not think it will be difficult to prevent that. The fashion magazines are the only ones she ever buys herself—she depends on me to bring home the others. And while she usually reads them, she would not be sufficiently interested to ask for any special one, or even to miss it. The only danger lies in someone sending it to her."

"But there is no one to do that—no one knows—"

"Then, I don't think you need have any fear about it."

"And you mean—you mean that you do not despise me for publishing that story? Oh, but you will—you will when you have read it, when you realize all that I have put into it."

"Would you rather I would not read it?"

She looked at him incredulously.

"If it will help you—I will promise that."

Margaret knew that she would have been utterly unable to keep such a promise—and yet she felt that he would keep it.

"No, I think I'd rather you *would*

read it. The dread of it would always hang over me if you didn't. But don't read it now—not for a few weeks, at least. We have seemed so far apart lately; there has been so much to depress us. Wait; perhaps things will be happier."

Then she broke off and added hopelessly: "Oh, I suppose that is only a foolish fancy! I don't see how things can be different, and yet I have the feeling that I would rather you would not read it now—that I want you to wait."

"Poor little girl! I know things don't look very hopeful, and it seems to me that I am more and more helpless to make any radical change. But since there is so little that I can do for you, I will gladly do this—I will not even open the magazine until I have your consent. Will that help any at all?"

"A great deal." She smiled up at him faintly. For a moment she felt that some of the burden had been lifted from her.

But when he had gone, she told herself that he had not yet read the story, that, after all, she had given him only the vaguest outlines. Might it not be very different when he really saw it in print? But, at least, she had the assurance that he would not read it now, and she felt she could trust implicitly in that promise.

Two days later the magazine was on the news stands. Margaret first saw it in a small stationery shop around the corner from her hotel. In one swift glance she swept through the contents. "'The Immutable,' by Margaret Warren, page 149. Illustrated by F. T. Kempton."

Illustrated! She had not known that there were to be any illustrations. It had been rushed through so quickly—she had not thought there would be time for that. And they had sent her no proofs. "F. T. Kempton"—the name was vaguely familiar, but she could not recall his work. Hurriedly her nervous fingers ran through the pages—149, then over to the next page, on which was the drawing.

An impossibly tall and slender woman of the fashion plate type, whose clasped hands and upturned face had the effect of the cheapest melodrama, while in the background was the debonair figure of a man pulling at his mustache in the stereotyped manner.

An angry color burned in her face. That her story should be disfigured by such a drawing! It seemed inconceivable that the magazine should have allowed it to go through. Then she remembered something that Mr. Arnold, the editor, had said a few weeks ago about the growing demand of the public for illustrations in which the expressionless face and fashionable attire of the women were the dominant note.

But she soon forgot the drawing, as her eyes ran over the story with tense absorption. There were sentences that stood out with startling, accusing clearness. How merciless it seemed in type! And yet she was conscious of a certain thrill at seeing his very words on that printed page. Did she want him to see them, too? Was there in her heart something of pride, of exultation, that she could take an incident in their lives, use his own words and make of them a story so vital and dramatic?

She laid the magazine aside, only to pick it up again and again, to pore over passages, phrases, words. All that day and the next she lived in the atmosphere of the story. When she saw him and he made no reference to the issue of the magazine, she hardly knew whether her feeling was that of relief or disappointment.

When the magazine had been on the news stands three weeks and she knew that it had not reached Mrs. Whitman, Margaret felt that the chances of her seeing it were very slight. Periodicals are read soon after they are issued, and not at the end of the month. In another week the December number would take its place.

In all that time he had made no reference to the story. They passed many news stands, even stood before them at Elevated and Subway stations, where the magazine was conspicuously displayed, but his glance never sought

it. And always before, when one of her stories appeared, he could not pass a stand without making some comment or buying a copy. His silence now was a keen contrast to the pride and interest he had always shown. But Margaret felt that he had kept his promise; that, whatever his thoughts were, he had not read the story. And as his silence about it was so plainly intentional, she could meet it only with silence.

XI

As Margaret hurried up the broad steps of the Metropolitan Museum, her thoughts went back to the day, almost two years ago, when she had met him here on just such a gray, misty afternoon. Many times since they had met here, but it was that day that always stood out in her memory—the day she had thought their parting was final.

How much had happened since then! Through what changing phases of mind and conditions they had passed!

He was leaning against a case of ancient Majolica vases. She saw only the side of his face, but it wore an expression she had come to know and dread—a brooding despondency that was now becoming more and more frequent. He did not see her until she touched his arm.

"I'm sorry to be so late; the cars were blocked."

"I knew it was something like that," he said reassuringly. "You must never worry when you are detained in some way; I shall always understand and wait."

She smiled up at him. "Do you know that in all our meetings for over two years how rarely either of us has been late?"

"Yes, I have often thought of that. You are a very punctual, faithful little woman."

She pressed his arm. "And you—ah, my dear!"

They moved on to the next gallery. A row of seats was arranged in the center of the place.

"Are you tired? Would you rather

sit down a while—or shall we wander about?"

"Oh, let us wander about," she answered quickly, feeling that just now the motion of walking would be better than the conscious silence that would come between them should they sit down. For, in spite of his efforts to greet her cheerfully, she felt the weight of his depression, and there was within her no joy or lightness with which to relieve it.

The galleries were now almost deserted. It was near the closing hour, and the stillness around them was broken only by the echoing of distant sounds, that muffled yet booming echo peculiar to great buildings.

They walked on past the ancient pottery and paused before a case of jewelry of the early Roman period: curiously wrought rings and armlets with strange carvings and inscriptions.

"I suppose the men and women who wore those things loved and suffered and fought out the little tragedy of life very much as we do now," he said musingly. "After all, it is such a few years at most. When one looks at it in that way, it doesn't seem to matter so much whether we have been happy or unhappy—in a little while it will make no difference. To the woman who wore that small, twisted bracelet there with the glowing stones, it makes no difference now—it has made no difference for thousands of years—whether she was loved or unloved. And to the man who carried that dagger—of how little consequence are his victories and defeats!"

"But one so rarely thinks of it in that way. We do not ordinarily feel the insignificance of our individual life and efforts as we do here."

"No, and I suppose it is better that we do not; there would be so little incentive for any achievements if we did."

The dusk and silence lent an infinite melancholy to this realm of the past, these relics of antiquity, treasures of lost arts that had so long outlived the hands that wrought them.

A chill sense of dread, of terror, of

the inevitable force of life and death, was creeping over Margaret. She wanted to cry to him to take her away from this tomb of the ages, to give her life and love and joy and laughter. And yet she realized how little he could give her, how helpless he was to shield or protect her in any way.

It was not until a great gong struck the closing hour that either of them spoke. A guard came through, calling, "All out—all out!"

How strange the street seemed after that hour in the archives of the past! For a few moments Margaret felt that the things they had left in those gloomy galleries were more real, more a part of her own life, than this hurrying crowd, these glittering cabs and carriages with their shining lamps. The transition was too sudden from the silence and gloom of the Museum to the throbbing life of the great city.

Instinctively they turned into the Park, to avoid some of the noise and glare of the streets. And again Margaret thought of that day two years ago when they had left the Museum and walked through the Park along the same path they had chosen now. The same deserted seats lined the way; the same lamps glimmered here and there among the trees. Now they were walking over the same rustic bridge; the dark water reflected the lights now as it had then.

"The swans are missing," he said quietly, as he drew her to a pause by the railing, just where they had stood before.

She started. "Were you—"

He nodded.

They walked on in silence—the brooding silence that had of late become so large a part of all their wanderings. With sick foreboding Margaret realized how little they had to say to each other now. They were both so tired of these aimless, homeless wanderings. The charm they had for them in the beginning had long since worn away. And yet, as he said bitterly a few days before, they had only the streets and cafés. And when Margaret had cried out futilely, as she had so many times

before, asking would it always be like this—would they never have a home—he could only give her the same hopeless answer: that he did not know; they must try to wait.

The path had finally led them out of the Park, and now they were walking along a rather dark and dreary side street. Their usual endings to walks like this, particularly on a cold or damp day, was a half-hour in some café with a glass of wine or cognac. But lately he seemed rather to avoid this. Margaret vaguely felt the reason—that he did not wish to take her so often to such places. But now she felt chilled through, with both the cold and the depression of her thoughts.

"Oh, do take me somewhere where it is warm and light—I am so cold and tired!"

Instantly he aroused himself. "Poor little girl, how thoughtless I have been! We should have taken a cab when we came out of the Park. Where shall we go? I don't know any place around here."

"Isn't that a café down the street, on the other side?"

"That doesn't look very attractive; I don't much like to take you there."

"It doesn't matter—any place will do for a few moments. We won't have time to go anywhere else."

He made no further protest, and they crossed the street. It was a small German rathskeller. A piano and a strident violin were clashing loudly some popular tune. The air was heavy with smoke. Although it was early, a number of the small tables were already filled. A passing waiter, with some empty beer glasses in one hand and a soiled towel in the other, paused for their order.

Margaret asked for a glass of cognac. She knew he would rather she would have sherry or any light wine, but she wanted something to give her warmth, to drive some of the chill depression from her thoughts.

She felt his repugnance to the place, and his greater repugnance to her own careless indifference for it all. He was moodily toying with the matchstand that stood on the table between them.

"Why did you insist on me bringing you here? You know I don't like to see you in places like this."

"Why?"

"You know why. You must see the character of the place and of the women who come here."

"And do you think I shall be permanently contaminated by a few moments of this atmosphere?" bitterly.

He pushed back the matchsafe impatiently.

Margaret reached her hand across the table toward him.

"Don't you see—it isn't altogether the *place*; it's because we are both so tired of this homeless wandering—of having nothing but the streets and restaurants and cafés. Oh, if you could only come freely to my apartment, instead of always having to roam around like this!"

"We have tried that over and over again, and it always ends disastrously. She always finds out, and then it takes days to pacify her. Just now she is more content than she has been for some time, because she thinks I am not seeing you at all. And I must have peace at home if I am to be able to look after my work."

"You always hold that over me—your work."

"I must, dear," more gently. "Can't you see we could have no future if my work goes to pieces—and it nearly has. A practice that took me fifteen years to build up almost ruined because of my neglect in the two years I have known you."

"Oh, don't say that! How can you blame me? How—"

"I'm not blaming you, dear; I am only trying to show you how fatal it would be if I should come to see you with any regularity again. I can risk it occasionally, but if it should be often, she would be certain to learn of it, and there would be more scenes and more sleepless nights—more days when I should be utterly unfit for work. As it is, I have sleepless nights enough."

"But I thought you said she was content now!"

"She is, but don't you think I am

worried about you—about your future? Don't you know I see what a strain all this is on your health—how depressed and hopeless you have become? Don't you think I am always trying to find some solution?"

"You *do* see that?" She leaned forward eagerly. "You *do* realize how it is breaking me down—how pale and worn I look? Somehow, I have thought you *didn't* see—"

"Of course I do, dear." He covered the hand which lay on the table with his own. "But I thought it best not to talk about it—that it might only make you worse, that you might try to force things—to use my sympathy to bring about some crisis which I feel now would be fatal for us all."

"Oh, no—no, I wouldn't; it would help me! It is because I sometimes feel that you have become so blind and indifferent to my condition that it makes me almost desperate."

"I could never be indifferent to your health, Margaret—you ought to know that. But I am always hoping that I can do something. I would always so much rather act than talk."

"And you know it isn't really my health—I mean, it is only the result of all this strain—that if we could be together always I should be perfectly well and happy. You know that, don't you?"

His hand closed more closely over hers. "Yes, dear, I do."

Her eyes dropped and a faint flush came to her cheeks. A large gray cat, with a leather collar, that had been roaming leisurely around among the tables, now jumped up on a chair beside Margaret. She stooped over to pet it, glad of a chance to hide the color in her face. It rubbed against her and purred exuberantly.

Suddenly she looked up, her eyes aglow.

"I wonder if you know how much more I love all things, particularly children and animals, since we met?"

"I believe I ought to know." He smiled at her tenderly. "You have told me several times."

"Oh, how cruel of you!" she

laughed. "Have I said that before? I suppose I have, but I'll never—"

"Yes, you will; you must say it many times more. Those are the things I love to hear."

It was a lighter, happier mood than they had been in for many days. They left the café with a feeling of nearness that made them unmindful of the chill air and dreary street.

"Shall we take this car? It goes almost to my door," she suggested quickly.

Margaret always kept him from calling a cab when possible; from the very beginning she had had an instinctive reluctance to his spending much money on her. Often her little subterfuges to keep down the expense of their outings would both hurt and offend him.

The car was crowded, but he found a seat for her and stood by a strap beside her. Now and then, as the car lurched, he would be swayed against her, and she was conscious of the thrill that always came when he was very near.

When they left the car at her corner he glanced at his watch.

"It is only a few moments after six. If I get home for dinner by seven, it will be all right—so we can still have almost an hour more. Shall we walk up around the square?"

She assented eagerly. Her heart leaped at his evident reluctance to leave her; it was as it had been in those wonderful first months.

She pressed against his arm. "After all, dear, we do have some very happy moments still."

"Still! Why do you say that?" he asked quickly.

"Ah, you know it hasn't been the same lately."

"It is only because we have been so worried—there have been so many things— But if we can only help each other to be patient, it may mean a greater and more permanent happiness than we have ever had."

They walked on for several moments in silence, but it was a contented silence, not the brooding abyss that was so often between them.

Suddenly she felt him start. He stepped back.

"That is Mrs. Whitman!" in a tense voice. "You must excuse me." He lifted his hat, and the next moment was hurrying across the street.

For a moment she stood perfectly still where he had left her. Then she walked straight ahead, seeing nothing, her eyes on the ground, her cheeks ablaze.

That he should have left her—left her alone in the street, after dark—to go to *her*! That he should have subjected her to this!

There was a quick step behind her; his hand was on her arm.

"What can I say? I should not have left you—I see that now. But I had no time to think. My first impulse was to go to her; I thought she had not seen us, and that I might prevent it. I know now that I should have stayed with you."

"Then you left her?" tensely.

"It was not she; I was mistaken."

"Oh—oh," with a hysterical laugh. "So that is why you came back to me! It took great courage to do that!"

He made no answer.

"If it had been she—and she had seen us—and you had gone, as you said, before you had time to think—would you have come back then? Would you let *her* see that you were leaving her for me—as I saw you were leaving me for her?"

He was silent.

"Would you?"

"I don't know," in a low voice.

"You don't know?"

"I told you, Margaret, that, had I had time to think, I would not have left you. But, having gone to her, I do not think I could have come back to you."

"Why?"

"Because it would have been far more of a deliberate insult to her to come back to you than it would have been to have remained with you. You must see that would have been an intolerable thing."

She knew he was right, and yet so fierce had been her indignation that

now the desire to make him say anything that would soothe her hurt pride was very strong.

"Don't try to force me to say anything I cannot mean, Margaret; that can never help. I am unspeakably sorry this happened—that I left you in that way. There is little enough I can do for you without subjecting you to any humiliation. It is a pitiable thing to wound the pride of the woman one loves, and I am willing to say or do anything I can to make amends—anything that will be true."

Margaret was still struggling with herself, with a jealous indignation that still welled in her throat.

"Listen, Margaret; I will do this. There are going to be guests at the house for dinner tonight, and of course I should be there. But I will give it up; I will take you out to dinner instead."

With one of the quick impulses of her nature, all the bitterness vanished now.

"No—no; I wouldn't want you to disappoint your guests. I am not quite so childish and selfish as that. I know many times I must have seemed so, or you wouldn't think such a sacrifice would appease me now. But I'm not going to be like that any more; oh, I'm not—I'm not!" There were tears in her voice and eyes.

"And you must hurry now or you will be late for your dinner. And you mustn't worry about this; I'll try not to think of it any more." It was the best of her love that was uppermost now.

"You mean that, dear? You will be content to have me go? You will not brood over this and become hurt and bitter again when you are alone?"

"No—no, I promise that I won't. Only"—she hesitated with a pitiful little laugh that seemed to beg tolerance for her weakness—"if—if—"

"If what, dear? Let me do anything I can."

"Oh, I know I shouldn't ask you—but I *do* want you to say that if we ever *should* meet her on the street, that you would never leave me like that again."

"I will say that with all sincerity. I hope it may never happen, but in our constant wanderings there is always a possibility that it may. If it does, whatever the consequences, I will stay by your side."

As he hurried home, more than ever he realized how much of the child there was in her nature. In spite of all the unhappiness that he knew this very trait had caused them, it was one of the things that most endeared her to him. And now his thoughts went back to her with more than usual tenderness.

The incident of leaving her on the street had filled him with keen distress. He had a sense of having failed her in a crisis, of having been put to a test and found wanting. He remembered she had once said: "If it ever comes to any real crisis, I shall be the one you will fail—not she." All through the dinner his mind dwelt upon it.

XII

MARGARET sprang from her bed in the fear and bewilderment of a sudden awakening. As she hurried across the room, her glance fell on the clock—it was only seven! What did it mean? Who could be telephoning so early?

Then she recognized his voice, and knew by the tone that nothing had happened.

"I hope I haven't startled you—but I wondered if you would like to take a trip in the country today."

"A trip in the country?"

"Yes, I am going out to Fair View to drive Prince in. Would you care to go with me? You have been out so little lately, I thought this trip might do you good."

"Oh, I should love to go—you know that!"

"Can you get down to the Grand Central in time for the seven fifty-five train?"

"Yes, yes, I think I can; I will try."

"Then take the Subway. It will be quicker than a cab. I'll be there to meet you."

Only fifty-five minutes! Could she make it?

She dressed with breathless haste, filled with delight at the prospect of the day with him, of the long drive back through the country. It was just half past when she left her apartment. Only twenty-five minutes more—and the Subway was two blocks over.

Fortunately she did not have to wait for a train; one dashed in as she ran down the steps. The car was crowded with early morning workers. At the Grand Central station she saw him before the gates were open. Her heart leaped, as it always did when she met him, and the thought came to her how often she had seen him like that, how many trips they had had together, how rich were the memories of their wanderings! And now today another trip lay before them, another day full of new experiences, new possibilities for happiness.

"Am I in time?" eagerly.

"In good time," he assured her.

"We have three minutes yet."

He hurried her through the station and out to the waiting train.

"I am afraid there are no chair cars; will you mind an ordinary coach?"

She laughed happily and pressed against his arm. "As if I would mind anything while I am with you! Oh, I'm very, very happy this morning!"

"Then you didn't object to my calling you up so early?" in the tone of one who knows the answer but wants to hear it in words.

"Object?" For a swift second she brushed her cheek against his arm.

He bent over her. "Margaret, dear little Margaret!" It was the tone and phrase that always thrilled her.

They had just reached their train as it was moving out. With a quick, strong movement he swung her upon the steps. She flung him a laughing, tender glance.

The city and its shabby outskirts were soon left behind, and they were whirling through woods and fields. There was a note of joyousness in the crisp morning air and vivid sunshine. He had opened the window beside them and the fresh, earthy odor of the country blew against their faces.

"It's going to be a wonderful day—think, dear, a whole day together! After all, it is a beautiful world to give us this."

"Do you still think that, Margaret?" he asked tenderly. "That is what you used to say, but lately we have had so much unhappiness, I have been afraid—"

"Oh, I know, and yet if one can have moments like this, surely it compensates."

"If I could only feel you would always think that!"

For a while they were silent. Both felt that the other's mind was teeming with thoughts, thoughts that involved all the questions of their future, a future that stretched before them, baffling, impregnable, hopeless.

To interrupt these thoughts that could only depress them, he told her how he had happened to get away for the day. Two cases that had been set for that morning had been withdrawn the afternoon before, which left the day practically free. She repressed the desire to ask why he had not telephoned her before, why he had waited until this morning. But he divined her thought. After a short hesitation, he said, with evident reluctance:

"Mrs. Whitman has been saying all the fall that when I drove Prince in for the winter she wanted to go with me. And I did not know until this morning that she—would not go."

"Would not go?" She knew, whatever the circumstances, that she had no real cause for the jealous resentment that was rising within her.

"Would not go?" His silence increased her feeling.

"She said this morning that she did not wish to go."

"And then you asked me?" bitterly.

He turned to her. "You told me once, Margaret, that you would have no feeling about conditions of this kind; that you wanted me to take advantage of every opportunity to be with you, however it came about."

"I know—I know I did."

There was another silence. He leaned

forward and raised the shade a little higher; then he said quietly:

"The trees are unusually brilliant this year. I don't remember any fall when they were so vividly colored."

"Why did she not want to go?"

"Because we had some words last night."

"Some words?"

"Margaret, are you going to insist that we talk about that now? Do you want to spoil this day?"

In the hurry and excitement of their meeting she had not noticed the wearied lines in his face, but she saw them now. They were lines she had learned came only from a sleepless, wretched night.

"You did not sleep last night?"

He made no answer.

"She did not let you sleep?" bitterly.

Still no answer.

"Then why did you take this trip today?"

"Because it was a chance to be with you. And I thought the outing might do us both good. But it won't if you insist upon talking about—" He finished the sentence with a gesture of despair.

The weariness in his face and voice awoke in her a thrill of pity.

"No—no, I won't, I promise. We will forget everything but that we are together for a whole day."

A train boy came through with chewing gum and chocolates.

He turned to her with sudden anxiety. "You have had no breakfast?"

She smiled. "Have you?"

"It doesn't matter about me, but I've been very thoughtless of you. And of course there's no dining car on here."

He called the boy back. "Have you any oranges—any fruit of any kind?"

"No, sir."

"Can you get any at the next stop?"

"No, sir—not till we get to Parkstown."

"I'm so sorry, dear," when the boy had passed on. "But I'll tell you how we'll manage it." She nestled closer. She always loved to hear him say: "Now I'll tell you what we'll do," or,

"Now I will arrange it this way." It always gave her the feeling she so craved of being looked after, of being taken care of.

"I think I told you that Fairville, the railway station, is just five miles this side of the farm. I shall have to get some kind of a vehicle there and drive over after Prince, and I will take you to the hotel there and you can have breakfast while I am gone."

"Then you will not have any breakfast at all?"

"I'm afraid I won't have time. If I stop for breakfast it will make us so late." He took out his watch. "We shall be at Fairville about half past nine. It will take me over an hour to drive to the farm and back; that will make it nearly eleven. Then we have forty miles back to New York, and part of it is a bad road, and we want to get in before dark if possible."

"Then I'll not stop for breakfast either; I would much rather go with you. I have always wanted to see your farm—the rustic seat you made yourself and the little summer house by the creek where you wrote me so many letters."

He hesitated. "But I am afraid you couldn't see those things."

"Couldn't see them?"

"I couldn't drive you up to the house. I would have to leave you in the vehicle somewhere down the road. The caretaker and his wife are there, and if a strange woman should come with me they would be sure to mention it to Mrs. Whitman."

Margaret made no answer, but the old fierce jealousy and bitterness rose in her throat. She was looking steadily out the window at a stretch of ragged cornfields. It was always so—always she must be thought of. They could never have a day, not even an hour together, but that they must think of her!

He covered her hand with his own. "I know, dear—I know what you are thinking. But I am afraid it can't be helped."

"Very well, then. I will wait at Fairville."

"Ardsdale!" shouted the conductor.

"It's just two more stations now, dear."

A few moments later they stepped from the car to the platform of a straggling little village. Directly across from the station was a three-story, shabby frame building with a large sign: "Palace Hotel."

"This is the only place here," as he took her across the street. "I'm afraid you can't get much of a breakfast, but you must try to eat something."

"And you won't wait for even a cup of coffee?"

"I think I had better not. The livery stable is just around the corner. I'll get a man and a rig there, and try to be back in an hour. We can have an early luncheon on the way; there are a number of good roadhouses between here and New York."

Left alone in the dingy country hotel, Margaret felt strangely desolate. The close, musty smell of the dining room, the soiled tablecloths and the smeary catsup bottles banished any appetite she might have had. She ordered only coffee and rolls. The coffee was brought her in a thick, cracked cup, with a small pitcher of bluish milk.

Why not spend this hour in fixing up a lunch—a lunch they could eat on the way? It would save time; they need not stop at a roadhouse unless they wished. She welcomed the idea with enthusiasm. It would give a picnic atmosphere to their trip, and how surprised he would be!

In a few moments she was exploring the main street of the village. There were no delicatessens, but there were a number of small grocers and bakeshops. In the cleanest of the bakeries was a capable-looking woman, who, under Margaret's direction, made a number of sandwiches and packed them in a large paper box. Sardines, olives, crackers, cheese and fruit from a nearby grocer filled the box.

Then she saw him coming—far down the street. Prince was fairly dancing over the rough cobblestones. As he

drew up she noticed that his face was slightly flushed, but she gave it no special thought.

He sprang out, hitched the horse and took the box from her.

"What is this—our lunch?" joyfully.

She nodded. "How did you know?"

"I had hardly left before I thought how much time we could save if we had a lunch put up at the hotel."

She laughed. "This is much nicer than anything they could have put up at that hotel. I did it myself—got the things at groceries and bakeshops."

"It'll seem like a picnic," boyishly.

"That's what I thought. But we haven't anything to drink. Can we get a bottle of mineral water?"

"I am afraid not here. But perhaps I can get some wine at the hotel; they have a small bar there. Let me put you in the trap first, and then I will see what is to be had."

To Margaret, in her eagerness to be off, it seemed a long time before he returned with a bottle and a couple of glasses wrapped in a newspaper.

"It's a cheap California claret, but it's all they had."

He put the bottle in the bottom of the trap with the lunch box and sprang in beside her. Prince knew his touch on the reins and dashed off with a purr of delight. They were soon out on the broad country road. He leaned over and tucked the laprobe about her.

"Are you warm and comfortable, dear? We have a long drive before us."

Again she noticed that his face seemed strangely flushed and his hand trembled as he arranged the robe.

"Graham, you are not well?" anxiously.

"Not well—what makes you think that?"

"Why—you seem so flushed; you are not feverish?"

"I've a headache, that's all."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. It's because you had no sleep last night and nothing to eat this morning. Let me get you a sandwich now." She stooped over for the box.

"No—no, not now," almost irritably. "Wait until we get out a little further. Prince is too restless to stand now."

The trap lurched heavily as a sharp turn kept them from sliding down a deep gulch at the side of the road. A moment later they just grazed the wheel of a heavy farm wagon. As Margaret instinctively turned, she saw the man looking back in angry astonishment. And then she realized how recklessly he was driving. When they whirled over a narrow bridge, escaping the edge by barely an inch, she caught his arm with a little cry. Just then they came to a forked road. The horse plunged ahead, seemingly without guidance, to the left. Margaret saw that the road was a private one and led up a hill to a large house half hid among the trees.

Without a word he turned Prince sharply around, the wheels grating fiercely against the side of the trap.

"Graham, do you mean that you did not know where we were going—that you left it to the horse?"

"Why not? Does it matter where we go so long as we are together?"

As she looked up in startled alarm, he drew her to him and kissed her.

And then—she knew!

She shrank back, covering her face with her hands. "Oh, Graham, what made you do it?"

"What made me kiss you? Why, sweetheart, I didn't know you would mind."

Her heart sickened at the cheap evasion and the forced playfulness of his voice.

"Oh, you know I don't mean that; you know what I mean! Oh, how could you—how could you?"

He did not answer, but she saw that he was frowning darkly. They were now at the crossroads again. With a jerk he turned the horse back over the road they had first come.

"Graham—Graham, where are you going? This is the way we came!"

Again he jerked the horse around, this time almost overturning the trap. "You are hard to please this morning," with an unpleasant laugh.

"Oh, how shall we ever get to New York—how shall we ever get there?" She was almost sobbing now.

The horse, impatient at the many turnings, was tearing along at a dangerous pace. She saw that his hold on the reins was far from steady. The effect of the liquor was increasing! How much had he drunk? How long would it last? Would he be able to manage the horse? She was thoroughly terrified now. But worse than her terror was the hideous realization that he should have done this thing—that today of all days he should have had so little self-control. He had stopped somewhere on his way for Prince; she recalled now his flushed face and the length of time it had taken him to get the wine. Her own face burned hot with anger and indignation.

The trap was swinging perilously near a deep ditch by the side of the road, and just ahead was another narrow bridge.

"Graham, let me drive for a little while, won't you?" tremulously.

"Why?" curtly.

"Why—because I like to drive, and it will rest you."

"I am not tired."

They dashed across the bridge and on with increasing speed. If she could get him to eat something, that might help. The very fact of his having eaten nothing since the day before may have made him more susceptible to the liquor. She took the lunch box up on her lap and opened it with trembling fingers. She folded back the paper and took out a sandwich.

"Graham, won't you try to eat something?" appealingly.

He shook his head.

"You have had nothing to eat this morning? Nothing while you were gone for Prince?"

"No."

"Then you must have something now."

"I don't want anything to eat; I'll take a glass of that wine." His voice had grown thicker.

"Oh, no—you must not have that now."

"Why not?" angrily.

She saw her mistake. "Why—only because I thought you ought to eat something first."

"Where is that wine?"

She did not answer; the hot, angry tears were in her eyes and throat. The horse, of its own accord, had slowed down now. Holding the reins in one hand, he stooped over for the wine and glasses. She saw him pour it out.

"Graham—don't—don't! Please don't drink that now!" She caught his arm, causing a little of the wine to spill over on his glove.

"Look out there—what are you doing?" harshly.

It was the last blow to her quivering self-control; she covered her face with her hands and sobbed hysterically. The lunch box slid unheeded from her lap, its contents overturned at their feet. With a smothered oath he hurled the glass out into the road.

"Are you satisfied now I didn't touch it?"

But the fierce anger in his voice only made her sobs more violent. With another fierce oath he picked up the bottle and sent it crashing against a rock. The horse reared and sprang forward in nervous fear.

White with anger, and making no effort to check the horse, he jerked up the lunch box and flung it out. A bottle of olives and some sandwiches still lay where they had fallen when the box slid from her lap. He gathered these up and hurled them all into the road.

Margaret was staring at him now with wide, terror-stricken eyes. He did not once look toward her; he was gazing straight in front of him and she could see only the side of his white, set face.

The horse, now thoroughly, frightened, was plunging ahead, the trap swaying sickeningly from side to side. To Margaret it seemed that every second they would be dashed out. Then it came to her that this might be the solution of everything—death together in this way. And for the moment there was in her heart no sense of fear,

no desire to evade any end for which they might be destined; there was more a feeling of fatalism, of freedom from responsibility, of waiting quietly for the inevitable.

A long, clear stretch of road lay before them; there were no teams in sight. And gradually the horse wore itself out; its speed became less and less. Margaret relaxed her hold on the seat and leaned back with a sense almost of disappointment that the end had not come. To go on seemed harder just then than a merciful oblivion.

They were driving now in absolute silence. Again they came to a cross-road. She saw him hesitate and then choose the one to the right. Instinctively she felt that he did not know the road—that he had chosen at hazard. A few moments before, she had looked forward calmly to death, but, now that the danger was passed, all her indignation and horror at the situation flamed up again. Her anxiety about the road finally conquered her aversion to speak.

"Is this the right road? Do you know?" Her voice carried all the scorn and anger that she felt. She had recklessly thrown aside all desire to conciliate him now.

"Is this the right road?" She repeated it again.

"It may be."

"Will you ask the next person we meet?"

Silence.

"Will you?"

Still silence.

Margaret caught her breath; her face burned crimson. A bend in the road brought them in sight of a man leading a couple of horses. Would he ask this man or would he deliberately ignore her request? Unconsciously she leaned forward, tense, expectant. And then—he drove by without a glance toward the man!

The red in her cheeks flamed deeper. She clenched her hands in her effort to keep back the bitter, reckless words. A half-mile further on and a man driving a spring wagon came briskly toward them.

"Will you ask this man, or shall I?" tensely.

His answer was to lean forward, take the whip from the socket and cut it sharply in the air. Prince bounded forward, passing the man in a flash. Margaret sprang to her feet, her hand on the dashboard. In another second she would have jumped from the trap.

"What are you doing?" He caught her arm roughly and forced her back into the seat.

"I am going to get out. I will find my way back to New York alone."

"You will stay where you are!"

He kept his hand on her arm with a fierce grasp. She was sobbing convulsively in her helpless efforts to struggle away from him.

If he had admitted his condition—if he had been penitent and remorseful, her indignation would have been tempered with pity. But this sullen defiance aroused all her reckless, bitter antagonism. That he should have brought her out for a day's pleasure and then subjected her to this! With an almost childish enragement she thought of the lunch she had so carefully prepared and how he had hurled it into the road.

Again she struggled to free her arm, and again his hold tightened painfully.

"Oh, I hate you—I hate you! You are drunk—drunk!"

His only reply was a harsh laugh and a still more cruel hold on her arm. She had thrown aside all caution now; her only thought was to spring from the trap—to get away from him.

A road roller and a number of workmen loomed in sight ahead of them. By the machine was a man on horseback, evidently a foreman. When they neared the puffing engine Prince stopped suddenly and began to back.

As he released her arm to manage the horse, she sprang recklessly to the ground. In an instant she was on her feet to show him that she was unhurt. The fear of his springing after her and being injured had occurred to her as she jumped.

Two of the road hands, thinking she

had jumped through fright, came running up to hold the horse.

"It's all right now, miss; you can get back in. We'll lead him by the engine."

What could she say?

"No—no; I—I'm not going that way." Then she turned and almost ran down the road without a backward glance. She was vaguely conscious of her disarranged hair and flushed, tear-stained face. If she could get off the road—into the woods—away from the wondering eyes that she felt were following her! But on both sides the road was fenced in by a high rail fence. They had passed a bit of open woods—was it much farther back? If she could only reach it!

Then came the sound of wheels close behind. He was following her. Drawing farther away from the road and nearer the fence, she hurried on without turning her head. The wheels were quite near now—now they were beside her.

"Will you get in before any publicity comes from this? The man on horseback is following us. He knows you did not jump through fear. He thinks something is wrong."

Margaret knew by his voice that the incident had sobered him; it was perfectly clear and steady, but it was hard and cold as steel. He stopped the trap close beside her.

"I will not get in!" passionately.

"You must! When we pass this man I will let you out—if you insist."

"You mean that? You will let me out whenever I ask you—as soon as we have passed this man?"

"Yes."

"You give me your word?"

"Yes."

She moved toward the trap. Without waiting to be helped, she stepped in and drew the laprobe over her. He turned Prince sharply around, and again they drove off in silence. The man on horseback and the road hands were soon met and left far behind.

Now that he was almost himself again, if he had at that moment drawn her to him and expressed his regret for

it all—if he had been sufficiently humble and penitent, the day might still have been saved. She was waiting for him to make some amends, but his cold silence only the more bitterly incensed her. Did he think she had weakened—that she did not have the courage of her threat?

"I will get out here."

It was as though he had not heard her.

"You gave me your word!" tensely.

"Very well," curtly. He stopped the horse.

The next moment she was making her way along a narrow path that led from the road through an open piece of woods.

There was no sound of wheels. He had not driven on; he was still standing there. Then she heard his voice; he was calling something to her. But she could not hear the words—and she did not turn.

He would come after her. He would hitch the horse and come after her. He would be full of contrition now. When the trees and brush hid her from the road she turned and listened tensely. In a moment she would hear his step rustling through the leaves! But the stillness was absolute.

Then came the faint sound of wheels. He had driven on! He had taken her at her word and left her there!

She stumbled a few steps deeper into the woods and threw herself on a bed of leaves. She would lie there until he came for her! She would lie there until he came! Blindly, passionately, she said it over and over again to herself.

It was some time before she realized that her head was resting on the bare root of a tree and the rough bark was pressing cruelly into her cheek. She moved slightly and her head lay on the leaves. The odor of the earth came up fresh and pungent. But the ground was cold and damp—she felt the chill of it through her body.

Gradually the fierce anger died out of her heart, and in its place came a fearful sense of her desolation. The leaf-stirred stillness of the woods seemed filled with a shuddering pause,

a hushed expectance of some lurking horror.

If he should not come! What had he called to her as she entered the woods? Why had she not stopped and listened? Again and again she recalled the sound of his voice and tried in vain to fit it to words.

A quick rustle of leaves near by! She started up, her heart a-leap. It was only a squirrel gazing at her with bright, startled eyes as it whisked up a tree trunk.

She sank back in quivering disappointment, burying her face in her arm to shut out the sight of the woods. There was something vaguely comforting in the familiar warmth and feel of her cloth sleeve as it pressed against her eyes, and in the blurred blackness that wavered beneath her closed lids.

Then came a distant sound of snapping twigs and trampled brush that was unmistakable. Again she sprang up. Far to the right was a glimpse of his gray coat disappearing among the trees. He had not seen her—he was going away from her! To call out to him now would mean a pitiable confession of her weakness—her lack of courage. No—he must find her! Her indignation was still strong within her. She hurried on in the direction he had disappeared, hoping he would hear her and turn. At length the fear of being lost forced her to pause.

The silence now seemed even more sinister than before. Once more she sank down by the trunk of a tree. Slowly the shadows deepened around her. She could no longer cling to the hope of his coming back. He had made only a perfunctory effort to find her. The encroaching darkness now filled her with terror. She must go back to the road and make her way to the nearest railway station. It was growing colder; a raw wind had risen from the east. She was shivering with the cold.

With difficulty she found the road again. As she came out upon it there was a distant sound of wheels. Nearer and nearer they came. Was it too

heavy for a trap? Was it— It was only a farmer's wagon!

She choked back the sob in her throat and turned down the road. Why had she not asked the farmer to take her to the nearest station? She dragged herself on, but met no one else; there was not even a farmhouse from which she could ask the way. The long stretch of wooded road seemed endless.

And then, as she reached the top of a slight hill—there before her was a bay horse and a red-wheeled trap! A bay horse and a red-wheeled trap—it seemed to fill the whole horizon, to stand out before her, to stamp itself on her brain as nothing had ever done before.

But the trap was empty; it was hitched to a tree near the fence. For an instant a great fear chilled her heart. And then she saw him coming out from the woods. His face was white and set. Instinctively she shrank back.

He saw her then. For a moment he stood quite still. She did not move to meet him; her limbs seemed incapable of movement. The flash of joy that had crossed his face changed and hardened as he came toward her. She was strangely conscious of the awkwardness of their position as they stood facing each other there in the road.

"Did you do this to frighten me, Margaret? Was that your plan?" His voice was curiously quiet. When she did not answer, he added still more quietly:

"I hope you did not do it for that purpose; it would be very hard to forgive you if you did."

Hard to forgive—to forgive *her*! She caught her breath.

"Shall I put you in now?"

She submitted dumbly while he put her in the trap. Once more he turned Prince down the road.

"You are shivering. Are you cold?"

She nodded.

He took an extra robe from under the seat and wrapped it about her. But there was no warmth or tenderness in his manner—only a formal courtesy. As he arranged the rug, accidentally he touched her hand. Even through

the glove it was icy cold. Then he noticed the purplish pallor of her lips.

"You are chilled through. Where were you?" His voice was still colorless, but there was something in it now that forced an answer.

"In the woods."

"I have been searching the woods for two hours, but of course if you tried to hide from me it would be impossible to find you."

"I did not try to hide. You passed very near, but—"

She felt her mistake, but it was too late to retract it now. And at that moment she did not care; she had reached the stage where nothing made any difference.

"Then you saw me?" He repeated it.

"Yes."

"And you made no sign?"

"That was at first; if you had come back—"

"So I was right. You wanted to frighten me thoroughly—to be sure I would be humble, cringing and remorseful. You have used similar methods before; I'll not be so easily fooled again."

She made no reply. Physically and mentally she was incapable of further effort. The prolonged strain, the whole day without food, were now having their effect. She was staring down at the wheels, watching the small clots of earth fly from the spokes, miserably conscious that he was looking at her. Her head drooped; his gaze seemed bearing upon her like a physical weight. Was his anger changing to pity? Still her eyes were fixed on the whirling wheels.

"I am afraid you are very cold and tired. We will stop at the first roadhouse; we must come to one soon. Bradford cannot be very much farther now." But his solicitude was forced, perfunctory.

A shabby farmhouse stood by the road a short way ahead. He drew up by the fence and called to a man who was chopping wood in the yard.

"How far is Bradford from here?"

"Bradford? Why, you're goin' right

away from Bradford. It's about eighteen miles down the road."

"Eighteen miles down the road?"

"Yes, sir. Where'd you start from?"

"From Fairville."

"Then you've been on the wrong road for about twelve miles. You must have taken the wrong turn at the first crossroads this side of Fairville."

The first crossroads this side of Fairville! It was there she had begged him to inquire the way. But now she did not glance up nor seem as though she had heard.

The man came down to the gate. "Now I guess you can make that about thirteen miles if you go back by way of Camp Creek; it's a bad road, but it's five miles saved that way. You can let the bars down and cross through that meadow over there and get on the Camp Creek road."

"Thank you; but the lady is not strong enough to drive any farther now. Is there a roadhouse near here?"

"Yes, sir. There's a pretty good roadhouse just about half a mile straight ahead."

He thanked the man and drove on. He made no comment on the information; he did not speak again until they reached the roadhouse.

It was a faded white house with a wide porch. A discolored sign, "Parker's Inn," hung over the gate. A small dog ran out and barked at them excitedly. Then a man in his shirt sleeves came from around the back of the house. He held the horse while Whitman lifted Margaret from the trap.

"We have been driving some time and the lady is thoroughly chilled. Have you a place with a good fire, and something hot to drink at once?"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir." The man hitched the horse and led the way into the house. He opened the door into a small, low-ceilinged room, evidently the "parlor"—from the organ and marble-topped table. Back of this was the dining room, with a long table and two small ones, all covered with red-checked cloths. Both rooms were cold and damp.

"It's too cold in here; have you no fire?"

"We'll build one right away, sir."

There was a small drum stove in each room.

"Yes, but that will take some time. Have you no fire in the house?"

"Well, sir, there's one in the bar room—if you wouldn't mind goin' in there for a few minutes."

The bar room was across the hall, a long room with a bar at one end, and at the other a large fireplace with a smoldering log fire. A couple of men who were standing by the door stepped out on the porch as they entered.

The man threw some more logs on the fire, while Whitman drew up a large wooden rocker for Margaret. She was still blue and shivering with cold.

"Now if you'll bring a hot Scotch—"

"Hot Scotch? Yes, sir—for two?"

There was a pause. Margaret's clasp tightened on the arm of her chair. Then he answered quietly:

"No—just for the lady."

The small dog that had barked at them so fiercely came in now, sniffed at Margaret's skirt and curled up on the hearth at her feet. The thump of its tail on the floor and the crackling of the logs were the only sounds for several moments. Then the man came over with the steaming drink. Whitman took the glass and placed it on the arm of her chair. Margaret sipped at it reluctantly; the odor of hot whisky had always been distasteful.

"It is better not to sip it. Drink it all at once if you can. It may keep you from taking cold."

Then he turned to the man, who seemed to be both proprietor and bar-keeper, and asked if they could have something to eat at once.

"Supper will be ready right away, sir. And will I put up your horse, sir? I reckon you count on staying all night—your wife don't look fit to travel much farther."

The pause was only for a second. "We have not decided about the night, but the horse will have to be put up and fed."

"Your wife"—the word seemed still to hang on the air. Had it thrilled or repelled him? She felt the possibilities both ways. They were alone now. From outside came the grating of wheels as Prince was unhitched and led off to the stable. And then—silence, except for the crackling fire.

He came over and took the empty glass from her and set it on the mantel. Then he stood there looking down into the fire.

The heat was now burning her knees through her skirt, but she did not move back. She felt vaguely that the slightest movement on her part would change the situation that waited tensely for him to speak.

At length he came over to the chair beside her. "Are you warmer now?" He took one of her hands. "Your hands are much warmer."

A sick disappointment possessed her; she had hoped for something so different. He still held her hand with a slight pressure in both of his. But she did not return the pressure. He must come farther—he must do more! She could not meet him halfway—the fault had not been hers. Again the lump came in her throat. Again she saw him hurling the lunch into the road—the lunch she had so lovingly prepared!

All the child in her nature was uppermost now. She had been hurt, deeply, cruelly hurt. The least he could do was to make some expression of his remorse—and instead, he wished merely to ignore it.

He dropped her hand and walked back to the fire. The heat on her knees was becoming unbearable. She moved back a little. A log had rolled out on the hearth. She watched him push it in with his foot. Then she watched the glowing cinders where the log had lain; one by one they went out.

A stout, kindly-looking woman in a blue calico dress opened the door.

"There's a fire in the dinin' room, now, if the lady would like to come in there. I'm puttin' your supper on the table."

The dining room was lighted by a couple of oil lamps. From a window

one saw that it was quite dark outside. A fire roared in the small drum stove, and the air was filled with an odor of heat and stove polish.

The long table was set for a number of people; the woman placed them at the end by the stove. With a painful self-consciousness Margaret sipped at the glass of water in front of her. There was a poignant awkwardness in sitting there beside him in that way. He was toying with the fork by his plate.

"Where's that tea strainer?" came a voice from the kitchen.

"Right there on the end of the cupboard."

And then, a little later:

"Guess I'll take this milk back in the cellar—if you ain't goin' to use it in the rice."

He turned to Margaret with a slight smile. "If you are not too tired to take notes, this ought to make very good copy."

"Yes, it would make good copy." Her voice was as colorless as his.

In spite of the long day without food, neither of them could eat very much. The constrained silence was like a wall between them. He made a few remarks about the room and food, to which she answered in monosyllables. The thought of what would happen next was beating in her mind. What would be the rest of this day? It was dark, now—how could they go on? And yet, how could they stay here?

The strangeness of the place and of their being there was forcing itself upon her. Every detail of the room she felt was being stamped indelibly in her mind—the paper flowers and china ornaments on the mantel behind the stove, the highly colored pictures in their gilt frames, the old-fashioned "castor," the tall glass cakestand, the cheap, stiff lace curtains and the bright, flowered wallpaper.

"Will you wait here while I see what information I can get from this man? There may be a station near here and a train into New York tonight."

She waited there at the table, gazing out the window at the darkness outside.

A man passed with a lantern. A dog barked somewhere in the distance.

Then he came back into the room. "There's a station only a mile and a half from here, but there's no train to-night—nothing until five in the morning."

He was waiting for her to make some observation.

"Not until five in the morning?" she repeated vaguely.

"I can see no other way but to stay here until then. They have only one spare room, but I can lie here on the lounge." He paused. "Of course, if you have anything else to suggest—if you think you are strong enough to drive to the next town, we might get a train there, but it is very dark and there is no moon. It might be difficult—"

"Yes, it would be difficult; we had better stay here."

He flushed quickly, but the sarcasm in her words had been unintentional.

The woman came in now. "The fire is already laid in the spare room. I'll go touch it off if you're decidin' to stay."

"Yes, we will stay." Then he turned to Margaret. "Perhaps you would like to go up now; you will need the rest. We shall have to leave here at four thirty to make that five o'clock train."

"Right up this way, ma'am," said the woman. "I'll show you the room."

At the door, Margaret turned back and glanced at him.

"Good night," she said vaguely.

"Good night."

When the woman had lighted the fire and had gone, Margaret sat down on the edge of the bed and gazed around at the shabby, low-ceilinged room. And this was the ending of the day, the day that had begun so full of joyous expectance! It seemed months since she had answered the telephone in her apartment that morning.

She lay down now with a stupefied sense of weariness. Her eyes ached and burned behind their sockets; even the muscles of her face ached. She could think no more now. The im-

perative need of sleep was mercifully stronger than everything else.

When she awoke, the lamp had burned low and the room was filled with an odor of burnt wick and coal-oil. The place was very still—the stillness of a late hour. She went over to the window and drew up the halting, ragged shade. There was no moon; the blackness was impenetrable except where the faint light from under the window lay in a pale streak across the ground and the wooden walk beneath.

She went back and again sat down on the edge of the bed. The lamp was flickering out now, throwing quivering shadows over the shabby wall and floor. For the first time since that morning her mind seemed clear; the real meaning of the day came to her—the rapidity of incidents, the emotional stress. Her hurt pride and almost childish indignation had, until now, blinded her to the real horror and pity of it all.

She saw now in his drinking only another inevitable result of the torturing strain he had so long been under. His depression had been growing for weeks, and now this was only another development. It came to her, as it never had before—all the weakening, wrecking effects of their love. The immediate cause of this particular incident was only a detail—the night before made sleepless by the reproaches of his wife, and then the trip on the train without breakfast. He had probably felt the need of more strength and endurance for the long drive before them, and had sought to throw off his weariness by the stimulation of liquor. That its effect should have been so pronounced only proved its use was not habitual. She had never before noticed the slightest trace of it on his breath. But now—what would the future hold? Might he not turn again and again to the stimulating effects of alcohol as a relief from the almost unendurable conditions of his life?

She was filled with an uncontrollable desire to go to him, to put her arms about him, to shield him, as it were, from the horror of this thing. All her

bitter resentment was forgotten now in a great sense of tenderness and pity.

Where was he? He was somewhere in that still house. There was something weird and fearful about the silence and that flickering lamp. She opened the door softly and listened. There was no sound except her own creaking step. Slowly she felt her way along the black, narrow hall. Her groping hand found the banister and followed it down the steps.

At the end of the hall below was a dim, smoking lamp. The door of the front room was partly open; the gleaming white keys of the organ stood out in the darkness like the teeth of some devouring monster. Her heart was beating fearfully. What had been only an irresistible impulse to go to him now became almost a panic-stricken fear.

An overcoat that hung from a rack in the hall brushed her face as she turned. It was his—even in the dark she knew. She buried her face in the soft satin lining; it seemed to envelop her, to fall lovingly around her. A tremor swept through her at the faint fragrance of tobacco that it held. Where was he? Why did he not come to her? Was he in there? She turned the knob noiselessly. The only light in the room came from the open door of the stove, but it shone directly on his face as he leaned back in a large armchair.

He started up, throwing his lighted cigar in the fire. For a second he stood there uncertainly. Then she was in his arms. Who had made the first movement, neither of them knew. It was like a blinding flash of light; when it had passed he was again in the chair, holding her in his arms, her face hid against his shoulder and his lips resting on her hair. The room was again in stillness, except for the faint roaring of the fire in the chimney and the rattle of a window by the wind.

The sense of peace and contentment and languor that came from the strength and security of his arms was creeping over her like a narcotic. Her doubts and fears of a few moments be-

fore for the time were silenced. The comfort and assurance of his love, of his physical strength and presence, were with her again.

Once she raised her hand and timidly touched his face and neck. Even the feel of the stiff edge of his collar, the soft, silky tie, the rough cloth of his coat, thrilled her with a sense of his personality.

Her thoughts drifted dreamily back over the first months of their wanderings, the crowded East Side streets, the shrill cries of children, the haunting murmur of myriad lives. And then came memories of hours by the seashore, the glint of waves, the blue of summer skies, the distant white of sails, the stretch of sandy beach, the hotels gay with awnings and flags and bands.

He was gazing steadily into the fire. Was his mind, too, filled with these same pictures? Now and then, as if in response to some tender thought or memory, his arms would draw her closer.

In the silence and tenderness of this hour she knew they were nearer together, happier than they had been for months. If she could only hold those moments, keep them from passing! But even then, from some far-off barnyard came the crow of a cock, a melancholy warning of the dawn, the morning that would bring back all the difficulties and estrangements of their position. She clung to him with a passionate longing for some assurance of the permanency of this hour, yet knowing that its very preciousness would make it only the more fleeting.

XIII

For days after the trip in the country he was more gentle, more thoughtful; he seemed to make a greater effort to conquer his depression and moodiness than ever before. He had divined her fears and was trying to quiet them, to show her that the incident of the trip was purely an accident and one that would not be repeated.

For this assurance Margaret was very grateful. She tried to accept it without reservations, but she felt that a crisis had been reached. More and more she felt the impossibility of their going on much longer as they were. For the first time she admitted to herself that, at whatever cost, she wanted him to give up everything and come to her.

More and more she had withdrawn from social life, living only for the few hours he could be with her, and, in the intervals between, for his notes and telephone messages. Much of the time she was ill, ill with a feverish unrest, with the wearing strain of their relations, with constant, fruitless brooding.

As he saw her health and courage failing, he did what he could to cheer and comfort her. He was with her as often as possible and wrote and telephoned her constantly. But he did it at the expense of his work and peace at home.

With a feverish anxiety Margaret now began to want some definite assurance for the future, some definite promise that sooner or later he would secure his freedom and be with her always. But this assurance he could not give.

He knew that unconsciously she was now blaming him for the very things he had at the beginning feared that she would—for the absorption of her youth and love when he could give so little in return. He had told her then that he was hopelessly bound, and that he saw no way out. But then she had felt that she would be content and happy with just his love. And now she was not content. She wanted more—a great deal more. She wanted all that he had said he could not give, all that every natural woman wants of the man she loves: that he should make her his wife and shield and care for her in the security of a home. It was the woman's inevitable demand for the whole of the man. She can only delude herself for a time that she will be satisfied with less.

With Margaret that time had now passed. He knew that her demand

would come soon, that she could not much longer crush it down. And he realized his utter inability to meet it.

It came one afternoon, when he found her in a mood of unusual agitation, brought on by sleepless nights and incessant brooding. She burst into a passion of tears, sobbing out that she did not have the courage to go on alone any longer.

"I have tried—oh, you don't know how I have tried! But I haven't the strength nor the courage. You must do something to help me. I can't bear it any longer. Oh, I can't—I can't!"

Before this passionate outbreak he stood helplessly silent.

At length he asked brokenly: "What can I do, Margaret? What do you want me to do?"

"Give up everything and come to me! It is the only way," she sobbed.

"How can I leave her now? I cannot leave her penniless."

"And you put money before my happiness?"

"I must—the money I owe her."

"But it isn't as if it were really her money; it is only money that you made and gave her."

"You know how I feel about that. It was her share of my income; I can never think of it differently."

It was a long time before she answered him, and then she said despairingly:

"Oh, I know—I know you are right; I could not want you to feel otherwise. But when you have made that back—when all that is straightened out—Oh, if I could only have something to look forward to—something definite to hold to!"

"Don't, Margaret; don't force me to make any definite promise that I will leave her. I would feel even more contemptible than I do now, knowing that I had deliberately pledged myself to sacrifice her. If the time comes when we are swept off our feet— But to plan it in this deliberate, cold-blooded way! You promised once to help me protect her—to be content with just my love—never to ask this of me."

"I know—I know I did," she

moaned. "And I meant it—I was stronger then. But now—now I have no strength left."

"Then, don't try to weaken me, Margaret. Let me keep what little I still have."

For several moments he gazed straight before him, then suddenly dropped his head in his hands.

"It looks so black—so hopeless!"

His voice, the droop of his shoulders, his bowed head, stirred something deep in Margaret's heart. She saw the grayness around his temples. It had not been there two years ago, and now—it whitened daily. A lump rose in her throat. She went over and knelt beside him. He did not move; it was some time before she spoke.

"I am going to try to be more patient and not worry you so. Oh, I will try, dear—I will!"

"It isn't that; you do try. I know you do. And I suppose you can't help it when you break down. I know how hard it must be for you—but what can I do? *What can I do?*"

He rose abruptly and put her from him almost roughly.

"Let us not talk about it. It never helps; it only makes it harder for us both."

He walked nervously up and down the room, and then paused by a table and picked up a magazine.

"I can stay only a little while, Margaret; let me read to you—it will be better than this hopeless discussion." He was turning through the magazine. "Don't you want to lie here on the couch?" He drew up a low chair beside her.

Margaret knew that she would be unable to fix her mind on anything he might read, but she leaned back obediently among the pillows. He was still turning absently through the magazine. Then she saw him start, his eyes fixed on a page. Abruptly he closed the magazine and picked up another.

"Here is the last *Review*." His voice was not quite natural. "There will probably be something in this."

But Margaret had started up nerv-

ously. "What was it you saw in that other magazine—why did you drop it so suddenly?"

"There is nothing in it; it is simply a number I have read."

But she had crossed over to the table, picked up the magazine and was searching through the table of contents.

"Listen, Margaret; I can stay only a few moments. We don't want to spend them in any more discussions; it will only make us both more wretched."

She did not seem to hear him. A swift glance down the table of contents had revealed nothing, and now she was sweeping through the magazine. Suddenly a paragraph stood out.

... if another woman should ever become more necessary to his happiness—she had always said she would give him up. Now, after twelve years, the test had come. Was she strong enough? Could she do this thing—give him to another woman? ... love, real love, meant the happiness of the one loved ... give up her home ... each chair seemed a part of her ... go away alone ... rest of her life alone. ...

On the opposite page was a picture of a middle-aged woman stooping over a trunk, the room in the confusion of packing. Underneath were the words: "She would take only this old smoking jacket; that much of him she would carry away."

Margaret raised her eyes and met his. "It is this!"

He did not answer.

She swept back to the first page—the second—the third. In a moment, with her marvelous ability for tearing the heart from a story almost at a glance, she had grasped it all.

"What has happened? It was more than that you read this; she must have—"

"She read it to me," tensely.

"*She read it to you?*"

"She came down to the library one evening and asked if I had time to listen to a short story. Then she read me that. When she had finished she laid the magazine on the arm of my chair and went upstairs again. She made no comment on it whatever. But her silence was stronger than any comment."

Margaret was clasping and unclasping her hands. "Oh, it must be horrible! I think I begin to realize now just how horrible your life must be. She is always with you—a constant living reproach, making you feel in a thousand ways the strength of her claim. Oh, I can imagine the allusions and references! I can imagine her referring with pretended carelessness to some notorious divorce, where the man leaves his wife for an actress or chorus girl. Every newspaper now is full of loathsome accounts of infidelities, of scandals and divorce. All that is in her favor. I have never spoken of it before—I shrank from referring to it in any way. But you must have felt it, too—the degradation of it all! It seems— Oh, I cannot tell you how I feel about it!"

"I have felt it all, Margaret, but I hoped you had escaped—that it had not affected you in the same way. That is why I have never spoken to you about it."

"How could I escape? I can never pick up a paper without being confronted by some glaring, hideous travesty of love; and I throw it down with a fierce hope that you have not seen it, too. I have tried not to see these things—tried not to read them. But there are times—oh, I hardly know how to explain it—when they have a sort of horrible fascination for me. The Wenford case—you remember that?"

He nodded.

"For days I followed it; I hated and loathed myself—but I couldn't help it!"

"I know, dear; I think I understand—I have had something of that, too. It is only that you are morbid, that you have brooded over all this too much; it is only another result of the unnaturalness of our lives."

When he was leaving he picked up the magazine.

"I want to take this with me, Margaret; I don't like to think of your reading it now."

"I might as well read it as to lie awake all night wondering what is in

it, imagining much more than it could possibly contain."

"Yes, I suppose so." He laid the book back with a sigh.

That night Margaret read the story again and again with a feverish intensity. It was by a well known writer of short stories, and was written with unusual strength and skill.

The theme was in no way new or original, and there was no attempt to make it so. It was simply, but strongly written. It was the story of a woman past middle age, who, after twelve tranquil years with her husband, discovers that he loves another woman and that for her sake he is fighting against it and trying to crush it out.

Many times during those years she had said proudly, in the security of his love, that if it ever ceased to be love, that if another woman ever took her place in his heart, she would want him to have her. She would go away—she would give him up.

The scene in which the wife finally decides to live up to this, now that the test has come, was very strong. The description of her packing was vividly real—of her going over the house, saying good-bye to each room, each piece of furniture which from all these years of possession had become a part of her. All these she would leave; she would take only her personal clothing, nothing of his except the old smoking jacket. She had told herself that she would take one—just one—thing that belonged to him. And after a heart-breaking hour in his room she catches up a worn smoking jacket and buries her face against it. If only it would hold always that odor of tobacco! If she might always have something that would bring him back to her so vividly! She gathers up a handful of cigars from a box on the table and slips them into the coat pocket. In the loneliness of the months to come she will bury her face in that coat and it will still have that odor—it will still seem almost as though his arms were around her.

She packs the coat in the bottom of her trunk with all his photographs that she had gathered from all over the

house. These, at least, belong to her, she tells herself passionately, for they were taken when he belonged to her. All her pictures she takes—all except one, and that, after a struggle, she leaves. It is an old-fashioned picture of a young girl in a muslin gown, taken when they were engaged. The woman he loves now could not be fairer than she was then! She glances at her poor, lined face in the mirror. Oh, what a pitiless thing is age to a woman—age that fades and withers! It is because of this that her husband now loves a younger, fresher face.

The story ended with a dramatic, almost a melodramatic, incident, which brings out the light, frivolous, selfish nature of the other woman, and brings to the man a consciousness that his love for her is only an infatuation. He follows his wife and brings her back to their home with a deeper realization of his need of her.

For days this story haunted Margaret. She tried to escape it, to put it aside, but the picture of the middle-aged woman stooping over the trunk was always before her. All her former ideas and conceptions of his wife now seemed to fade away, and in her mind it was that woman by the trunk who was his wife. Again and again she pictured her going through the house, taking leave of all the things that had made up her life for so long.

With her vivid, persistent imagination, she lived through what this woman must have suffered in the past two years, with the ever-increasing fear that she was losing her husband, that he was growing away from her, and that she no longer had youth or beauty with which to hold him.

For the first time Margaret realized the full strength of his wife's claim, the claim of all those years. She understood, as never before, his efforts to shield her, and something of what he felt when he said: "How can I leave her, a woman with whom I have lived for fifteen years, a good woman who is dependent on me for her happiness?"

She *would* help him shield her; she would crush out all bitterness and jeal-

ousy; she would acknowledge and respect this woman's claim. She remembered with a fervid sense of gratitude that he had said a few days ago: "She is more content now than she has been for months, for she thinks that I no longer see you."

She would do nothing to disturb this contentment; she would be satisfied with less than she had ever had, would see him less, take less of his time.

And all this she did to silence something within her, something before which she blanched and quivered, something that said there was only one way, only one thing that was *right*: to go away—to give him up altogether. Desperately she strove to crush out this thought, to appease it by any other sacrifice.

All the ways in which she had justified her position in these two years seemed painfully inadequate now. Her vindications seemed the shallowest sophistries. She tried to strengthen them, to reassure herself, to get back some of her old beliefs and convictions; but now they eluded her. Everything seemed slipping away. The stronghold of her defense had at last been assailed.

XIV

THE change in Margaret's attitude was marked. She was now very patient and uncomplaining. She seemed no longer to rebel at her position; the feverish discontent was suddenly arrested. In many ways she made him feel the lessening of her demands.

But her heart contracted with pain when she saw with what relief he accepted this change, how quickly he availed himself of his greater freedom, with what readiness he acquiesced in any suggestion from her that he should be with her less, that he should give more time to his work.

She had once seen a play, a powerful play, in which the problem dealt with was the triangle, and in which the man's love for the woman who was not his wife had ceased, but he felt himself forced to keep up the pretense to her,

just as he tried to keep it up with his wife. In some ways he felt his duty and obligation to her more strongly than if their tie had been a legal one; that he owed it to her to keep up the pretense even more than he owed it to his wife. There were many things besides love that he gave his wife—the prestige and protection of his name, the security of his home. But all he could give this other woman was love—she had sacrificed everything for that. Could he take it from her now?

At the time, the play had made a strong impression upon Margaret, but now—it seemed to her that the anguish which this thought brought was greater than anything she had ever known. But it was only fleeting; her assurance in the strength and permanency of his love was too deeply rooted to be suddenly shaken. And yet some tendrils of the thought fastened themselves around her heart; she could not tear them all away. And now and then she would feel their grip as she saw some new proof of his willingness to remain away—to see her less and less.

"It is only because of his work—because he has neglected it for so long," she would tell herself with a passionate conviction. And yet—again and again she felt the clutch of that fearful doubt.

With a stronger self-control than she had ever before exerted, she allowed these doubts and fears no outward expression; she refrained from making any "tests" of his love, a thing that a few weeks ago she would have done with hysterical frequency.

Repeatedly she told herself that she must not allow anything to weaken her resolutions—the picture of that woman by the trunk was still very vivid, the realization of her claim still strong. And there was, besides, the feeling that the anguish she felt, whenever this thought of his waning love possessed her, was only a little of what his wife must have felt, as for months she had watched him growing away from her.

This forced repression, this constant eating out of her heart alone, was even worse for Margaret's health than it had

been when she gave vent to her emotions, when she sobbed out her unhappiness in his arms. Her mirror reflected a face that was becoming daily more wan and colorless. And perhaps the greatest of all was that he did not seem to see it. And then she would torture herself with the thought: if he loved her, could he see her fail like this? Could he be so blind?

Over a month had passed in this way, when something happened that broke down her self-control, shattered her resolutions and brought back all the old feeling of bitterness and revolt.

It had been four days since she had seen him, and tonight he was to take her to dinner. They had not dined together for several weeks, and now she looked forward to it with eager longing and with the hope that it might bring them nearer. She reached the Elevated station, where she was to meet him, a few moments early, and waited at the far end of the platform, looking down on the crowded street.

She was conscious that a man was walking back and forth staring at her steadily. Annoyed, she moved nearer the railing. But he continued to walk by, passing so near that he brushed her dress, and tapping his cane lightly on the ground. A train drew up, but he made no effort to take it. And Margaret realized that he might think her own waiting was to encourage him. Another train passed, and as Margaret still waited, he thought his conquest was complete. He stepped to her side, raised his hat and said, "Good evening."

Without glancing toward him, Margaret swept past, back into the ticket office. Her face was crimson and her breath came fast. Her fierce indignation was not only against the man who had spoken to her, but also against the one for whom she was waiting, who allowed her to meet him at Elevated and Subway stations, thus exposing her to the possibility of such insults.

At first he had been reluctant to have her meet him in this way, but lately he had come to take it for granted. Had she made a mistake? In her eagerness

to make things less difficult, she had protested that she was willing to meet him, that, as she understood the need, she would not feel the humiliation. But, after all, does not a woman cheapen herself by any concessions of this kind? Would he not, perhaps, have valued her more if she had made him feel that she could not do this, if she had held herself more aloof? The very difficulties in the way of seeing her would have made him only the more determined to overcome them.

At that moment she felt keenly the humiliation, not only of her willingness to meet him in this way, but of many other concessions that she had made to facilitate their being together, to make it less difficult for him. It seemed to her now that she had tried to smooth the way by countless concessions of her pride and reserve. And how serenely he had come to accept these concessions—with how few protests!

Just then, through the open door that led out to the platform, she saw him step from the train. He looked up and down the platform, glancing at his watch, and finally saw her through the door.

She told him at once of the incident, of the confidence with which the man had spoken to her. She made no attempt to conceal her agitation or her bitterness. But even as he expressed his regret that it should have happened, and said they must find some way of meeting by which she would not be so exposed, she was conscious of the most poignant disappointment. There was something lacking in his concern; it was, of course, not quite perfunctory, but it did not ring with the tense solicitude that he would have shown a year ago.

All through the dinner it seemed to Margaret that he was further from her than ever before. It had been four days since he had seen her, and yet he had nothing, almost nothing, to say. Part of the time he seemed preoccupied, almost to absent-mindedness; and, again, it was as though he were making an effort to keep the conversation confined to the commonplace, to

avoid anything that might lead to personalities.

Margaret herself felt too heartsick, too bitterly disappointed, to make any effort to keep up even a pretense at conversation. She merely toyed with the food before her; it was almost impossible to swallow past the lump in her throat. But he did not notice that she did not eat. The waiter removed her plates almost untouched, but still he did not notice.

There had been a long silence, when suddenly he leaned forward and said, with that slow quietness which with him always meant suppression:

"Margaret, I am going to ask something of you. I hope you will not press me for the reason, and that you will believe that it is as much for your sake as for—anyone else."

She looked at him wonderingly. There was a short pause; then he said abruptly:

"Will you go out of the city for a few days? Some nearby resort—any place where you will be comfortable?"

He was waiting for her to speak, but she only gazed at him. Still he waited.

"I don't think I understand." Her lips were quivering.

"No. I see that I shall have to tell you the reason." He paused. "Lately we have not discussed these things, and you have seemed less feverishly discontented, more reconciled. That is why I am loth to bring up anything that may agitate you now. And yet I cannot ask this of you without giving you the reason—it is to save you from a painful meeting with Mrs. Whitman. She is coming to see you."

"Coming to see me!"

"I am afraid so."

"What do you mean? What has happened?"

"Margaret, I shall not go into details; I can only say that she has found out I still see you, and is taking this last desperate means to separate us."

"Oh, would she do a thing so—undignified?"

He was silent.

"And you want me to go away to prevent it?"

"I think it will be best."

"Best for *her*!" passionately. "You are afraid for her to see me—afraid I will tell her the truth. It is she you are always trying to shield—it is always she!"

"It is both of you. Do you realize what it would mean if she should come? Could you ever forget it? Can't you see I am trying to save you that?"

There flashed before Margaret the possibility of what it would mean—of the horror of meeting this woman. What would it be like? Would she come to denounce, to threaten or to implore—to plead with her to give up this man who was her husband? Her mind was filled with scenes—detailed, vivid, harrowing scenes.

She was gazing down in her lap, alternately crushing and straining at the napkin that lay there.

"How—how did this happen? We have been together so little—less than ever before; why should this happen now?"

"I told you I would not go into details, Margaret. It never helps. I have done far too much of that in the past. It is enough that she should suffer without my describing her suffering to you."

It seemed to Margaret that with every word he was drawing further away from her. She was filled with a cold desolation—a sense of standing alone—more alone than she had ever stood before.

"I have asked this of you, Margaret, only because I wanted to save you both from something that could not but be most harrowing. You may think it not necessary to go out of town—that you could merely refuse to see anyone that might call. But there is the possibility that in some way she might elude the bellboys and come direct to your rooms. However, I shall not try to persuade you. Now that you know, you must do as you think best."

"And when do you want me to go?" in a low voice.

"If you go at all, it should be at once—in the morning."

"Very well. I will go." It was hardly more than a whisper.

He started to speak, and then paused as the waiter came up to remove their plates. Margaret gazed down the long café; the mirrors, the lights, the gay groups of people—it all seemed to blur before her. The whole scene seemed unreal and far away, as though she were gazing at it from some great distance.

"If I could help you more in this, I would. But there are circumstances which I would rather not discuss that make it impossible."

In silent acquiescence Margaret made the slightest inclination of her head. Her eyes were fixed on the pale yellow wine in her glass; then she raised it and drank it all. And when a few moments later the waiter refilled the glass, she drained it again.

When they rose from the table she saw him glance at his watch.

"I suppose you know it will be impossible now for me to spend the rest of the evening with you. I can only take you home."

Again she only nodded.

It was not until they had almost reached her apartment that she realized all his silence meant. He was going to leave her like this—without planning or even asking where she was to go, without saying that in a few days he would come after her. He was leaving her without her even knowing when or where she would see him again!

She clenched her hands and pressed her hot face against the cool glass of the cab window. It was a familiar street they were passing, a street through which they had often wandered. That quaint chop house on the corner—how vividly came back a cold, snowy night when they had stopped there for a steaming hot punch! He had drawn off her gloves tenderly and chafed her hands, not only because they were cold but because he wanted to hold them. And that square with the lights shining through the dark trees—how often they had walked through there! And now—now he

was sitting beside her in cold, stern silence.

No—no, he could not leave her like this! He was waiting until the last moment, until they were almost at her door; but then he would make some plan; he would advise her where to go—he would say that he would come after her.

A dark church spire loomed before them. Just three more blocks! She caught her breath. Two more—one more! And still he was silent! The cab drew up. He helped her out. Motioning the cabman to wait, he walked with her up the steps.

"There is nothing I can say tonight, Margaret, that would help either of us. I don't know when I can see you; it will be harder now than ever before. You will have to be patient—there is no other way. I will see you as soon as I can after you return. Under the circumstances, it would be better if you did not write; but if you do, have the envelope typewritten and address it to the office."

A brief good-bye and he was gone.

Crouched on the floor by the window, Margaret had not moved since she entered the rooms. The place was dark; she had not waited to turn on the lights as she rushed to the window for a last straining glance after his cab. She had not even removed her hat, and yet an hour had passed.

An hour in which all the resolutions, all the self-control of the last few weeks were swept aside. There, alone in the dark, with no sound in the room except her own convulsive sobs, she told herself passionately that because she had tried, because she had made every effort to help him, to demand less and less, to force down her own heartaches and think of those of his wife—this was the result. He was letting the burden of this exigency fall upon her alone; he was sending her away from him like this!

What was it that had happened? In the confused misery of her mind that question beat unceasingly. What could have reawakened his wife's suspicions—aroused in her such a desper-

ate resolve and made him so cold and bitter? Instinctively she felt that whatever it was he thought it was her fault—that was why he had been so hard. What was it? What did he think she had done? For what cruel mistake was she to suffer?

And then in a flash she knew. It was her story—*her story!* After all this time—his wife had at last found the magazine! She felt herself in the grip of a relentless, inexorable fate.

If it had come before, when his love was unwavering—but now, *now* when she felt he was growing away from her! This had come now to estrange them further—to weaken his faith in her and strengthen his pity for his wife! Oh, it was fate—fate—a pitiless fate!

She rose, stumbling across the room to turn on the lights; the darkness had suddenly become intolerable—it filled her now with a sort of terror. Her foot caught on a small stool that lay in the way; she fell, striking her forehead sharply on the arm of a chair. For a moment she lay stunned, then rose blindly to her feet, the pain in her head adding to the unreasoning sense of fright.

The days that must pass before she could see him! The long hours she must spend alone—the fearful, anguished hours, every moment filled with torturing thoughts and doubts! She could not live through those days! He must help her! She must see him again—now! He *must* help her!

Desperately, and yet with a feeling that something was clutching at her, holding her back, she rushed to the telephone, only to remember that during the afternoon the operator had notified her that the switchboard was out of order and no telephone in the house could be used after midnight.

Margaret seemed now to be swept along by some irresistible force outside herself. Already she was in the hall, downstairs and out into the street. The telephone at the corner drug store was on a stand by the door; there was no booth and the clerk would hear everything that was said. But she knew of no other place near, and her desire

to reach him at once was now an obsession. She could hardly wait until Central gave her the number.

All these months she had been so careful about telephoning to his house; she had always felt the risk and guarded against it. But she was utterly reckless now; her mind held no thought but the feverish, consuming desire to reach him—to tell him he must come to her—that he must help her!

She could hear a buzzing in the instrument, which she knew meant the ringing of his number. There was a long, throbbing wait—and then:

"Hello!" It was a *woman's* voice! Was it *hers*? "Hello!" The voice called again and still again before Margaret could force the words:

"I wish to speak to Mr. Whitman."

There was no answer, only a sound, as though the receiver had been dropped. Another throbbing silence.

"Hello!" It was *his* voice now.

"I can't bear it," incoherently. "You should not have left me like that. I must see you again—now! You must help me; you must come to me now—only for a few moments!"

"That is impossible." There was a strange, muffled note in his voice.

"You must—you must; I can't stand it! I must see you!"

"I tell you it is impossible." Never before had his voice sounded so harsh.

"No—no—don't say that! Graham, listen—you must come—you—"

There was a faint click in the telephone.

"Hello! Hello!" in quivering fear.

But there was only an abysmal silence.

He had hung up the receiver—he had deliberately cut her off! The hot blood scorched her face. She hurried blindly out of the store, away from the glaring lights and inquisitive eyes of the clerk.

Central might have cut them off! She caught at the thought with desperate hope. But she must be certain. If he had done it purposely—She would telephone once more, regardless of consequences. She must *know*!

There was a drug store a few blocks

further on—a large store, where there were booths. In her feverish haste she almost ran. She reached the place, only to be told the booths closed at eight o'clock, but there was a telephone on the cashier's desk. A number of people were in the store. No—no, she could not telephone before so many—she must go somewhere else.

She would take a cab to some large hotel, where there would surely be booths. But no cab was in sight. She rushed on, hardly conscious of her feeling of impotent, helpless rage at conditions. The red-banded window of a cigar store shone from the next corner. Without stopping to think, she ran in.

"Have you a telephone booth?" breathlessly.

The man looked at her for a moment. There must have been something in her evident excitement and distress that appealed to him, for he said courteously:

"Yes, we have one. It is usually closed after eight o'clock, but you can use it if you wish."

She murmured her thanks, as he unlocked the door of the booth, entered and closed it after her. Her hand trembled so she could hardly take down the receiver.

"3240 River!"

In the moment that followed she tried frantically to bring some order out of the chaos of her thoughts.

"Hello! There's your party," Central called stridently.

"Hello!" in his voice.

"Did you ring off purposely a few moments ago—or was it a mistake? Was it Central?"

"I don't know," in the same suppressed voice.

"You don't know? What do you mean?"

There was no answer.

"What do you mean—*what do you mean?*" Her voice rose in quivering excitement.

"I mean that you are precipitating a crisis."

"A crisis? What has happened? Don't torture me like this. Tell me!"

"I cannot."

"Then, you must come to me now! I cannot bear it. Graham—Graham—think what you are doing! I never asked you to come to me before; surely you owe me that much!" The words ended in a choking sob.

"Mrs. Whitman is here—in this room." He spoke with a sort of terrible distinctness. "She has been here all along. She has heard everything that has been said and knows who it is that is telephoning. Now do you want to say anything more?"

"Yes. I want to say that you must come to me now. If you never come again, I ask that you come now!"

"I cannot." Then again that faint click in the telephone. This time there was no doubt—he had hung up the receiver!

There was a red blur before her eyes as she once more called Central.

"That number—3240 River—will you call that again?"

He should hear her! He should know what she was going to do! Nothing he could say now would make any difference. She would not give him time to say anything. She would hang up the receiver this time. And then—

"I am ringing 3240 River," shrilled Central. "They don't answer."

"Ring them again—you must get them!"

Another beating silence that seemed to paralyze her whole trembling, weakened body, as she leaned against the side of the booth for support.

"I can't get 3240 River," called Central with a note of finality.

He knew she was calling—and he was *refusing to answer the telephone*. It had come to that!

She was only vaguely conscious of leaving the booth and paying for the call. Outside, the long line of street lamps blurred indistinctly before her. She made her way back to the drug store, swaying a little as she walked. But when she asked the clerk for four ounces of laudanum, her voice was firm and clear. Laudanum was certain and merciful—it brought only an unending sleep.

"Have you a prescription?" the clerk asked courteously.

"I did not think it was necessary for laudanum."

"What is it to be used for?"

Why had she not anticipated that question? She was compelled to hesitate as she tried to force from her mind some plausible use. The clerk glanced at her keenly.

"I am afraid I cannot sell it to you without a prescription."

What was laudanum used for? She repeated it over and over as she dragged herself on to the next drug store. A mind's picture of her mother's medicine chest came before her. There was always a small bottle with a brown-stained label marked "Laudanum." Even the odor and bitter taste of the dark liquid came back to her. As a child, what had it been given her for? And then the picture was complete. Her mother had the bottle in one hand and a toothpick covered with it in the other.

She met the clerk's query at the next drug store with the reply that it was an ulcerated tooth. He gave it to her, but made her sign her name and address in a register of poisons.

And now, as she turned back to her apartment, she was filled with the consciousness that it was over—there would be no more suffering, no more anxiety and suspense. All the misery and heartaches of the last few months would be ended. She looked down at the neat little package in her hand. Within its white wrapping and pink string lay—oblivion.

In the many times she had thought of this lately there had always been the dramatic element in it. She had always dwelt with a certain emotional pleasure on how he would throw himself by her lifeless body in his anguished remorse that he had not sacrificed everything to keep her with him before it was too late.

But now she did not think of that. She thought only of oblivion, of rest, of cessation of thought. She would not even take the trouble to leave a note or arrange things in any way.

As soon as she reached her rooms she would throw off her wraps, drink the laudanum—and then lie down for an unending rest.

She held the bottle closer; she thought that she might drop it or spill it filled her with terror. There was a feeling of security, of certainty, in the four ounces, although two would be all that was needed.

The events of the last hour seemed very remote now. The hotel loomed before her in the next block strangely unfamiliar, as though a great length of time had elapsed since she had left.

She did not even see the dark figure walking up and down before the entrance. She was on the steps, when she started back with a muffled scream. He was beside her! His eyes gleamed unnaturally dark from the pallor of his face.

Without a word he took the bottle from her clinging grasp and tore off the wrapper. The light from the doorway fell on the label. Then she heard a crash far out in the street.

Roughly he caught her arm and led her up the steps and into the elevator. He threw open the door of her apartment; she had not troubled to lock it when she left. She sank into a chair and covered her face.

"And that was your solution? That was your conception of revenge? You thought to put an everlasting remorse into my life. But it would not have been remorse. It would have been contempt—contempt for your weakness!"

She cowered before him, shrinking farther back into her chair.

"You told me that if things ever came to a crisis you would help me, that, if absolutely necessary, you would be content not to see me for days. And now, because I could not come to you tonight—because on your account an innocent woman has been driven to desperation, to a condition so pitiful that mere humanity would force me to stay by her side—this is how you would have helped me!"

She rose and turned blindly toward the other room, as though to flee from

his reproaches, and then from very weakness sank into another chair. After a long silence, he said less harshly, but with steellike coldness in his voice:

"This morning she received through the mail a marked magazine containing your story and an anonymous letter."

Margaret dropped her hands and turned her face toward him.

"An anonymous letter!"

"An anonymous letter, implying very clearly what the story was based on."

"No—no! No one could have done that—no one knew."

He laughed harshly. "It seems that someone does know—and knows a great deal."

A deep color flamed to her face.

"And you thought only of shielding her? You had no thought of me—of what any publicity would mean to me?"

"It will not be a matter of publicity. If it is, you probably know I will shield you at any cost. But I did not owe it to you to leave her alone in the condition she is in now. I came tonight only because of the fear that you would do some reckless thing. She knows that I am here."

"She knows that you are here!"

"She was in the room when you telephoned. For some reason the receiver gave out the sound—your voice could be heard all over the room. I tried to cut off—and you rang up again. I left her hysterical, with only a maid. But I promised that after tonight I would never see nor communicate with you again."

"Then she knows— You admitted—" huskily.

"I admitted nothing. She heard what you said over the 'phone."

"And you mean—you intend to keep that promise?" she whispered.

He did not answer.

"Graham!" Even her lips were white now. "You don't mean that? You can't!"

He turned to her fiercely. "Have I ever kept it before? How many times have I made her that promise? And

have I ever kept it? She says this is final; that if I ever see you again she will leave me in twenty-four hours. And yet you know I will keep on taking the risk. You know I haven't the strength to stay away from you long."

"Oh, don't say it like that; don't make me feel—"

"How do you expect me to say it? What have you done tonight but deliberately try to wreck everything? Even after I told you she was there in the room you rang again and again. She said she would walk out of the house then if I answered that telephone again!"

"Oh, don't—don't! I can't bear it." She dropped her head on the arm of the chair. He waited until the paroxysm of sobs had passed, and then said coldly:

"It is useless to cry. I can feel no sympathy for you now. I owe that poor woman something. The thought of how you have deliberately hurt and humiliated her may enable me to stay away from you for a while."

"I told you how I wrote that story, and how I regretted it. Do you think it will help her for you to taunt me with it now?"

"No, it will not help her," he answered dully.

"I did not write that in the spirit you think. I did not want to hurt her. Won't you believe me—won't you believe that I mean that?"

"You probably mean that now."

"Oh, you don't believe me," she moaned. "I know you don't believe me."

"Margaret, it isn't a question of my belief in your motives," he answered wearily. "The results remain the same: the suffering and humiliation that story has caused her—the needless suffering. What we have done in the past I have tried to justify because I felt that we could not help it—that our love swept everything before it. But this—this seems so deliberate, so wantonly cruel."

"Oh, don't—don't say that!" She put out her hands.

Only the flapping of a window shade broke the stillness that followed.

"Your love for me is dead!" There was a note of finality in the misery of her voice.

"Love does not die so quickly. But there is nothing I can say now that will help either of us. You had better let me go, Margaret."

She was watching him now with straining, fearful eyes. "You mean—you think it *right* to leave me like this—to leave me indefinitely like this?"

"I have not thought of it as a matter of right or wrong; that phase of it would not influence me now. It is simply a matter of humanity. You have brought upon her this needless suffering and humiliation, and I must do what I can to make it less. I owe her that much."

"And you owe me nothing?"

"Margaret, can't you see the uselessness, the futility, of all these discussions?" His voice was full of a weary patience.

"Oh, I cannot bear it!" She groped her way to him through blinding tears. "You must not leave me like this," she sobbed. "I cannot bear it—I cannot bear it!"

But she felt that his arms held her only that she might not fall; there was in them no warmth or love. He stood quite motionless, cold, unyielding. She felt that he was wondering when she would let him go—when her torturing importunities would cease. But even as she realized the futility of her efforts, she could not relinquish them. She tried to draw his head down to hers, to press her tear-wet face against his.

At length he said in a voice of utter weariness:

"If you will only let me go quietly, Margaret— I tell you frankly that just now the sight of emotion repels me. I have been through too much of it today. I am sick of tears and agitations. I feel that I cannot stand any more now."

With a muffled cry she released him and sank back against the wall. Without a word he turned to the door. A second later it closed after him.

XV

UNHEEDING the fine mist that was falling when he reached the street, he hurried on with bent head and tense, set features. A shrieking fire engine swept by with a shower of sparks, but he did not look up. The hose and ladder wagons followed with thundering hoofs. A crowd of small boys came rushing after, gleeful in their shrill excitement. He turned down a quiet street.

A sound of a stifled sob—and someone grasped his arm. He turned. Margaret's white face was beside him.

"Are you mad?"

She stood there bareheaded, the mist falling on her hair and thin, light dress. Both hands were clenched tight over her heart.

"You must come back with me!"

He did not speak.

"You must come back with me!"

"If you force me to go back with you now"—each word was like a slow lash—"it will be for the last time."

"You must come back with me!"

He turned and walked beside her.

Another engine swept by. They were only a block from the hotel, a block over which Margaret had fled in a breathless moment. But now they seemed to be walking on and on. He did not take her arm; he made no effort to shield her from the misting rain.

For the second time that night the hotel loomed before her, dark and menacing. The steps—the hall—the elevator—her rooms at last.

"No, no—you must not look at me like that! I couldn't help it—I *had* to go after you! I couldn't let you leave me like that! I couldn't bear the thought of tonight and tomorrow and the next day—all the long hours living it over and over!"

"And what will you gain by this?"

"Oh, I thought you might understand—that you might be kinder—"

"That I might be affected by your melodramatics? Don't you think we have had enough of them tonight? Will you let me go now?"

She took a step forward, her face whiter than he had ever seen it.

"Graham," she whispered, "*don't you know—why—I have lost my self-control—why I cling to you so desperately?*"

For a moment she stood before him. Then, with a strangled sob, she dropped to the floor.

"What do you mean?" huskily.

Her only answer was a tightened clenching of her hands as they lay out upon the floor.

From the street came the sound of returning engines, swelling to a loud rush as they passed and growing gradually fainter again in the distance. Then she felt his arms around her. He laid her on the couch and knelt beside her. At last he spoke.

"Margaret, I am ready to do whatever you ask."

She lay with her face turned from him.

"I will come in the morning. You can tell me then what you wish—what plans you think best."

"What plans I wish?" she whispered.

"Have you no plans—no wishes?"

"We are under too much strain to talk or think clearly tonight. If you will wait until morning, I will try not to fail you in any way then."

Her face was still turned from him. For a while he knelt there beside her, his head bowed on his hand. At length he rose. He stooped over and kissed her very gently.

"I will come in the morning. Try to sleep—to forget everything until then." He waited a moment, as though unwilling to leave her if still she needed him. But she made no motion. Then the door closed softly.

The street noises gradually ceased, as the traffic lessened into the night. And still she lay as he had left her, her burning eyes fixed on the wall. The room was tensely still. Only now and then came the sound of some prowling cab. And once the silence was sharply broken by angry, drunken voices—some late rioters straggling by. Then came the early morning sounds, the rattling milk cart and noise of street cleaners.

It was ten o'clock when he came. Two large trunks stood packed in the center of the room, and Margaret, in a traveling suit, was seated at her desk clearing out its contents.

She rose as he entered and stood holding to the chair. He was very pale, his eyes dark with a feverish brilliancy. He crossed the room and kissed her gently.

She smiled faintly. "I am all ready to go."

"To go?" Then he noticed the trunks and the dismantled room. "Margaret, you are not going—now?"

"That was what you wanted yesterday—for me to go away."

"But I do not want that now; surely you know—"

She was not looking at him; her head was bent over some papers she was gathering together on the desk.

"What have you done?" Her voice was low and curiously without expression, but her hands trembled among the papers.

"What have I done?"

"What plans have you made?"

"I have come prepared to meet yours. I told you that last night."

"And if—I have no plans?"

He was silent.

"You have thought of no—no way?"

"Margaret, I know of but one way: to tell her the truth—all of it—and ask for my freedom."

"And you think she would give it to you? You never thought so before."

"It is different now."

"Have you told her anything yet?"

"No."

"When will you?"

"At once—if you wish it."

"If I wish it—if I wish it! Oh, Graham—Graham, does it mean nothing to you? Is there nothing voluntary—nothing spontaneous in your attitude? Have you no thrilled thought of the wonder of it—of what it means? Oh, if there were only a single note of what I so long for in your voice!"

"Margaret, I shall do the best I can—everything I can. Do not make it harder."

"Harder?" She dropped the papers

now and faced him, holding tight to the back of the chair. "No—I am going to make it easier—oh, so much easier! You need not tell her—you need not leave her! *It is not true.* I deceived you. It was a last desperate effort to hold you—and it failed. What you offer me now is not from love. Even your voice, when you say: 'I will do whatever you ask,' is the voice of one who takes up a burden—who intends to pay unflinchingly the debt he owes!"

"I have been blind not to see that for weeks only the ghost of your love was left me. I do not think you knew yourself. Memories and ghosts are very strong, and it was those that still held you. And yet I should have known! There were so many things to tell me—your long absences, your willingness to remain away, your reluctance to talk of the future, the long silences when we were together—and oh, so many intangible things! But I did not know until last night—until you thought—"

"No—do not speak! I know all you would say—all the contempt and weakness you have for this deception. Leave me—now—without putting it into words; that is all I shall ever ask of you! Look—I am going in here to make it easier!" She turned to the adjoining room. "Now leave—quickly—while I have the strength to let you go!"

She ran into the room and tried to close the door, but the edge of a rug was under it and it would not quite come to. With her hands clasped against her throat she stood there in the center of the room, her eyes fixed on the door.

Somewhere in the floors above a pianola was playing a strident air. A faint hissing of steam came from the radiator in the corner. But there was no sound from the next room; he was still there—he had not moved! She was not breathing; it was as though even her heart had stopped. What did it mean? Was he hesitating? Was he coming to her? Could it be—

Then she heard his step. The outer door opened and closed. And she knew the room was empty.

The distant pianola, with a culminate crashing of chords, stopped abruptly. The radiator alternately simmered and thumped. From the street below came the shrill voice of a child at play.

Margaret had not moved; she was

still standing there in the center of the room, still gazing at the edge of rug that had caught under the door.

"*And he will never know.*" The whispered words came slowly. "*He will never know that it is true.*"



THE MEMORY

By THEODOSIA GARRISON

DOWN the little crooked street that went to meet the sea

The torn nets were drying on the grass.

She was mending at the old nets; she never looked at me—

On a blue September morning, with a west wind blowing free;

She never raised her head to watch me pass.

'Tis all I took away with me—a blue September morning,

The little street, the green grass and one girl's scorning.

I've forgot my father's house, the house that saw me born,

Forgot my mother's blessing at the last;

There's nothing but the old nets, tangled-like and torn,

And the head that bent above them, yellow-colored as the corn,

That never raised to watch me as I passed.

I wish I'd be forgetting it—a blue September morning,

The blowing grass, the torn nets and one girl's scorning.



BUT THEY MIGHT FREEZE

BRONXITE—Is it dangerous to put combustible things on a radiator?

HARLEMITE—Well—er—not in our flat.



FREAKISHNESS is the eccentricity of mediocrity; originality, that of genius.

IN THE BALLINGERS' BOX

By HAROLD SUSMAN

PLACE—*The Ballingers' Box at the Opera.* Enter Mrs. Ballinger's party, noisily, in the middle of the first act.

MRS. BALLINGER is a woman of forty-odd. She wears a gown of green satin, embroidered in gold, and has on a tiara, a collar and a stomacher of diamonds and emeralds. MRS. STAPLETON is a woman of thirty-odd. She wears a gown of red satin, embroidered in silver, and has on a tiara, a collar and a stomacher of diamonds and rubies. ALGIE PARTRIDGE is a young man of twenty, very odd. REGGIE VAN CAMP is a man of about the same age and also very odd. ALGIE and REGGIE both wear conventional evening clothes.

MRS. BALLINGER

Isn't it disgusting having to grope about in the dark, this way!

ALGIE

I've never yet turned up but that the lights were turned down.

MRS. STAPLETON

Mercy! I almost broke my neck!

REGGIE

That would have been a pity. You would have spoiled your lovely collar.

MRS. BALLINGER

Algie, you are on my train.

ALGIE

I beg your pardon. I thought it was Mrs. Stapleton's. I am on the wrong train; I'll get off.

MRS. STAPLETON

Reggie, I've dropped my handkerchief.

REGGIE

Was it an accident, or are you playing a game?

MRS. BALLINGER

Mrs. Ponsonby, in the box at the right, is making ugly faces at us.

ALGIE

That's nothing. It's the only kind of face she knows how to make.

MRS. STAPLETON

Mr. Fortescue, in the box at the left, just said that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for coming so late.

REGGIE

Well, I say that he ought to be ashamed of himself for coming so early.

MRS. BALLINGER

Fancy his wanting to hear the whole opera!

ALGIE

Fancy his not wanting to get his money's worth!

MRS. STAPLETON

I think "Madame Butterfly" is terribly tiresome, anyway.

REGGIE

So do I. But, then, it isn't any worse than the rest of the repertoire.

MRS. BALLINGER

I'd rather go to "The Dollar Princess" any time.

ALGIE

Of course you would. Who wouldn't?

MRS. STAPLETON

Oh, there's the end of the first act!

REGGIE

Thank goodness, we are through with that much!

(*The curtain comes down. The lights go up. So do the opera glasses.*)

MRS. BALLINGER

Every box is occupied tonight.

ALGIE

The Bellevilles' box is very much occupied. But, then, Mrs. Belleville is a crowd in herself.

Mrs. STAPLETON
Mrs. Roberts has got her husband
with her.

REGGIE
How ostentatious!

Mrs. BALLINGER
Well, Mrs. Demarest has *not* got her
husband with her.

ALGIE
Then she ought to be ashamed of her-
self.

Mrs. BALLINGER
My dear, can you see what Mrs. Tem-
pleton has on?

Mrs. STAPLETON
I don't believe she has anything on
at all!

Mrs. BALLINGER
Oh, yes, I see a scrap of pink tulle!

Mrs. STAPLETON
You must have good eyesight!

ALGIE
Who is that man with Mrs. Mel-
lotte?

REGGIE
That isn't a man! It is an Italian
count!

ALGIE
Does she want him for her daughter?

REGGIE
No; she wants him for herself.

Mrs. BALLINGER
Mrs. Bishop has on her old blue dress.

ALGIE
Yes, but she has on her new red hair.

Mrs. STAPLETON
The hair isn't becoming, is it?

REGGIE
Not yet. But it is becoming be-
coming.

Mrs. BALLINGER
Mrs. Martin has on her diamond
crown.

ALGIE
She looks like "heavy, heavy, hangs
over your head."

Mrs. STAPLETON
Mrs. Nevill has on her emerald ear-
rings.

REGGIE
She looks like a police station.

Mrs. BALLINGER
But, my dear, just look at poor old
Mrs. Williamson! She is all dressed up
like a broken arm!

ALGIE
She has on everything but the
kitchen stove. And now that I look
closer, I see that she has that on, too!

Mrs. STAPLETON
She has got Bertie Montgomery with
her. He is very musical.

REGGIE
Yes, he has musical teeth. He looks
as though he swallowed the piano, and
the keys were still sticking out of his
mouth.

Mrs. BALLINGER
Mrs. Williamson likes him to kiss her.

ALGIE
Yes, and he told me that every time
he does it, it suggests to him biting a
piece out of a plush armchair.

Mrs. STAPLETON
Oh, horror! There go the lights out!

REGGIE
I wish that we could follow their ex-
ample!

*(The lights go down. The curtain
goes up. And so do the voices.)*

*Mrs. Ballinger's party continues chat-
tering until the middle of the third act,
and then they go out noisily as at their
entrance.)*



ONE WOMAN'S VOTE THAT WILL BE COUNTED

HOWELL—I'm engaged to Miss Rowell. Congratulate me, old man.

POWELL—I would, if I did not know that in her case a nomination is not
equivalent to an election.

WAYSIDE ACQUAINTANCES

By HELENE GEORGE NORTON

IT was springtime in a California lane, many, many miles from staid old Boston town. There were roses everywhere. How manifest an absurdity, then, would it have been to oppose the dull gray of deadly conventionality to a world so young, sunshine so golden, life so rose-hued!

Therefore, as he strode singing, a goodly youth, through an archway of roses—La France these, pink and frailly corpulent—and came suddenly face to face with her as she lay, flung boy fashion on the grass, and read from a green book of the bards—therefore, I say, he obeyed the instinct of life and youth and singing time and rose time; he stopped and spoke to her.

Now that was not so bad. In California lanes many strangers hail in passing, since it is a land of strangers. And the startled little upward nod she gave him was very maidenly and modest. Decorum ceased in that he did not pass, but stood and looked down at her, while she looked up at him almost as steadily, save that her lashes quivered up and down and the La France roses flew into her cheeks. He should have seen that she was not a lady accustomed to wayside acquaintanceships, and so should have spared her. But his keen eyes did not waver, and suddenly he sank down beside her and smiled with pleading good fellowship into the eyes beneath the quivering lashes.

"Suppose we *are* strangers!" he said tentatively. "It is miles and miles from stupid Boston town. Isn't it foolish, isn't it against the will of the smiling gods to mind being strangers—

in California, in the springtime? Let's get acquainted just as fast as we can. And then, if you like, if you say so, after this one golden morning we will forget each other again."

She looked at him sidewise under the lashes. He was so boyish and nice-looking and clean of muscle and soul—for the soul of him was in his wistful eyes. So she gave a little troubled laugh that, paradoxically, was quite carefree, and she sat up in the green grass and closed the green book of the bards and smoothed her white frock into intensely precise folds and nodded back at him.

"But you're sure you won't think I'm—that sort of person?" she asked doubtfully.

"What sort of person?" he demanded blindly. Perhaps he knew, but was in hope the question would bring a rose back into the cheek nearest him. That, at any rate, was the wholly satisfactory result.

"The sort that gets acquainted pro-promiscuously," she explained. "Really and truly, I—I never did let a man do—do this before."

"Do what?" he asked stupidly. His hand had fallen very near her hand, so near that it brushed the slender fingers, and she drew them away hastily and tucked them into penitential retreat in a sun-browned little fist.

"Why—why, this," she told him definitely. "To sit by me and—and—" She paused pathetically. And he looked at her in wide-eyed innocence.

"And breathe the same air and look at the same sky and smell the same roses?" he inquired. "That is be-

cause you have never lived in California in the springtime before. You have lived—I am sure you have lived in Boston, where spring means slush unspeakable and naked branches against wet skies and winds that chill the heart in you and produce tonsillitis and an acute sense of propriety."

"You are clever—for a stranger," she said. "And you must have lived in Boston, too, since you know so well where I have lived."

"Yes," he confessed, "I have lived in Boston, too. But in three weeks of—this, I had almost forgotten that past misfortune. It is, you know," he said softly, "it is something one can always live down."

The rose bloomed permanently now in the cheek nearest him. A blue butterfly poised above her brown head; in the pepper tree behind them an oriole burst into a brief passion of song.

Slowly her eyes turned to him, and swiftly turned away.

"A—a true Boston girl," she hazarded, "a true woman of *any* sort, I'm afraid, wouldn't—wouldn't desire to live it down."

"You're afraid," he cried triumphantly. "Does that mean that you *do* desire it?"

His hands went out to her eagerly, but the eminent propriety of her outraged profile abashed him.

"I beg your pardon," he said contritely. "Of course, you didn't mean that—of course you couldn't."

She turned her face coldly away from him. "I have no desire to forget that we are strangers," a remote little voice said haughtily. The blue butterfly fluttered away quite terrified. The oriole hushed his love song—so very, very haughty was the voice. There were premonitory symptoms of retreat in the billows of white and fluffs of lace. She extended a firm, unhesitating hand for the green book of the bards, but it was just beyond graceful reach—for her. He reached for it himself and pocketed it.

"Don't go," he pleaded. "Listen! I won't forget that we are strangers.

I'll be good—truly, I will. But I have been so very, very lonely. I have been ill, too," he finished with pathos.

She looked at him with large scorn. "You look ill," she commented ironically.

"It was last fall," he said hastily. "I was, truly. For three days I didn't leave my room."

"Oh!" She breathed pitifully. Then she eyed him suspiciously again. "Overeating?" she asked sweetly.

He tried to look injured. "No; a low fever," he told her gloomily. "I—I was all run down, you see. I didn't—I really didn't in the least care to get well. That was what made it such a long siege."

She had turned her head away again, and he tried in vain to see her face. But her shoulders, pink through the fluffs of lace, moved convulsively.

"You are laughing," he accused her resentfully. "That is because you are from Boston. It is only Boston girls who laugh at a man's heartaches. That is the only bit of humor they really appreciate."

"You seem"—the voice was uncertain and full of little breaks—"you seem to be very familiar with Boston girls as a class."

"No; they won't let a man be," he corrected her mournfully. "But I was in love with a Boston girl once."

"Impossible!" The voice mocked him. "No man would dare—far less be so familiar as to—to tell her!" The sentence had an interrogatory inflection.

"I was going to," he said grimly. "From the moment I met her I knew I was going to. But, you see, we both lived in Boston. She had lived there all her life, there and—highly chaperoned—in Europe. And she was—"

"Well?" the voice asked against his hesitation. "What was she? I—I shall know you better when I know the sort of girl you could fall in love with."

"Well, to begin with, she was quite perfect," he said. "So perfect that she had no mercy at all for the little rough places in other people's souls.

She had a little Sunday-school class, and she did a little settlement work, and she belonged to a little Meredith club, and she—wanted men to be her spiritual affinities!"

The La France rose nearest him had lost a petal. He watched it float up into one small ear and linger there.

"It is a scathing list of virtues," she said. "And you?"

He sighed. "I was her suitor—that is, to be exact, I was just in the preliminaries. Essentially proper are the ways of our civilized era. So many days before I was able, by skillful maneuvering, to be introduced; so many diplomatic and casually arranged meetings, tentative calls, hazarded courtesies—violets at first; later, offerings a little more pretentious, but still artless."

"But so many men were doing—those things, I suppose," suggested the girl in the grass. "You might have been a little more original, don't you think?"

"I didn't dare," he gloomed reminiscently. "She had three centuries of chaperons behind her. Still—I was only a poor little bit of a human man, after all—and one night—"

He paused for a long time, but the girl in the grass seemed to have lost interest. Perhaps he could scarcely have expected her to be interested in his previous love affairs, but with a little shrug he went on:

"One night—I hadn't really known her very long, and I hadn't given her due warning, but, heaven knows, it came as unexpectedly to me as to her—I looked too long at her mouth. She had a curly mouth—and I kissed her—once."

The girl in the grass had found a struggling red and black beetle scaling a rose stalk, and she helped him charitably and with close attention. One might have thought she did not hear. Then—

"Was she suitably grateful?" she asked with irony.

A slow red crept into his face as his thoughts went back. The lazy amusement had gone from his voice.

"After all, it isn't a joke," he said harshly. "She chose to consider it an insult. Think of that—holding me—capable! Think of misunderstanding—love—like that!"

The beetle, having reached his goal, promptly tumbled down again. She watched him make his disgusted way through the untrodden forest of the grass stalks.

"But men—" The voice was hesitating. It was a hard question to discuss with a stranger—in California—in the springtime.

"Men don't—kiss girls—that way without leading up to it—without gaining the—the right, when they—when they think they are—*nice* girls," she pleaded weakly.

"Nice girls!" He invoked the skies helplessly. "Why, good heavens, I wanted to marry her! I had gained the right because I loved her! Does one have to spell love with all the letters in the alphabet to make it understood? It was as natural, it was as right, as life itself! It was life calling to life; and she—she should have known." His voice softened a little. "Oh, well, she couldn't help it, I suppose," he conceded. "She should have lived, just once, in a California lane—in the springtime."

"And, instead—" she asked. He saw that she was trembling a little—as though she were afraid of what girls might learn in California lanes in the springtime.

"Instead—she dismissed me. I think if I had not gone meekly she would have called a servant. But I went—oh, I went! It was lovely and melodramatic. She declared that we must henceforth be strangers. I thanked her politely for anticipating my wishes. It was a sweet scene."

"But afterward I tried to see her; I tried to explain. It seemed so absurdly grotesque that she should not know I loved her. Then she showed me how in earnest she was. She did not see me; before three separate crowds, on three separate occasions, she did not see me. It hurt a little, and I—went away."

The bees droned happily in the sunshine; the blue butterfly darted back out of the blue somewhere; the oriole tried a timid bar or two up in the pepper tree.

"That was six months ago," he mused at length. "I have never dared to love another Boston girl."

"Look at that bumblebee!" she cried, tilting her head still farther away from him.

"Why?" he asked calmly. "Do you wish to change the subject?"

His eyes were upon her—boldly, admiringly, as a man has undoubtedly a right to look at girls who meet his advances halfway among the roses.

"To change the subject—I? Why should I?" She sat up quite suddenly and faced him hardily. "I thought the subject was finished; you have talked so long about that Boston girl. You—you hurt her very much, didn't you? She—you see, perhaps she had heard of—of the many other women you had known, and though she didn't blame you for knowing them—and you had been very nice to her—still, perhaps she had never dreamed that you could love her—so soon, at least. And perhaps she was afraid you thought she—she was afraid she had held her face too close to yours, perhaps—or—or something. And you—you made a mistake and—kissed her. Isn't that all there was to it? There

doesn't seem to be anything more to say."

She looked at him wistfully, this little stranger of the rose lane, and her eyes drooped suddenly before the threat in his. And he had promised not to think her that sort of person! But he drew himself across the grass toward her.

"I made a mistake, yes," he said softly. "You couldn't expect much of me, though; I, too, had lived in good old Boston town. But now I know I made a mistake. I should have kissed her again—so—and so—and so-o-o!"

Oh, but there was a whole garden of roses aflame beneath his kisses! And after a while he took his hands from either side her face and watched the petals fade and glow and fade again, and laughed softly. And the girl laughed, too, though the tears made golden stars of her eyes.

"It has been such a lonesome six months, stupid boy," she whispered—"waiting for you to—repeat the insult."

Somewhere in the world, perhaps, the trees stretched naked branches against wet skies and the wind chilled the heart in one; but here—

The blue butterfly had found a yellow one to play with, and the oriole shook with a very passion of singing in the pepper tree, and life was rose-hued and the young world green.



THE GAME OF LIFE

By CLINTON DANGERFIELD

WHO cares for the goal? It's the game
Sets the pulses aflame.
The goal is satiety. Bliss
In the chase alone is!
God, give us the hunt—though the prey
Shall escape us today.

THE PHILANDERING OF PENRUDDOCKE

By G. C. HARVEY

EDWARD PENRUDDOCKE, Captain in His Majesty's Dragoon Guards, had had, as he put it, "a fairly large time" in India during the past five years, yet he grinned with satisfaction as he sauntered along Piccadilly, eagerly recognizing all the old landmarks and noting the many changes. Mingled with his delight was a feeling of loneliness, though, for the club was practically deserted, everybody was out of town and he began to feel rather sorry for himself. As he neared Apsley House, however, he spied Mrs. Mardale stepping out of a hansom, whereupon he rushed up to her with outstretched hand. "How do, Mrs. Mardale?" he said. "By George, I am glad to see you again!"

Mrs. Mardale blushed slightly, hesitated, then held out her hand with a little gasp of surprise.

"Captain Penruddocke! Who would ever have thought of seeing *you* in town at this time of the year? Isn't the heat something awful?"

"Just come from India," said Penruddocke. "This is cool after that Godforsaken country. Where are you bound?" he went on, putting up her parasol for her.

"We've got the house full of people down at Chiltern, and I was so tired of them that I ran away today to do some shopping. We have rather a tiresome crowd—mostly John's friends, you know—and I was so bored!"

She looked reproachfully at the gallant Captain.

Mrs. Mardale's eyes had been sung by poets, toasted at messes and debated

over at clubs, and, verily, they merited all the attention they received. For they were as blue as the merciful Lord will allow women's eyes to be, and as changeable as the face of the waters. Shadowed by long lashes, they gazed on the world with an expression of innocent, childlike wonderment, which, when the crescentic eyebrows were slightly raised, turned to one of reproach that compels surrender. She raised her eyebrows as she glanced at Captain Penruddocke.

"I'm awfully sorry, you know," he said, as they strolled along together, "but it isn't my fault, is it? Can't you get rid of the bores and get some jolly people?"

"The idea just came to me when I met you, Captain Penruddocke, but I don't know exactly how to manage it without offending John."

The Captain bowed at the implied compliment.

"Like John any better than you used to?" he said presently.

"I simply adore him this month, when all his old frumps are with us, and—endure him all the rest of the year!"

"Got any shopping to do, really?" inquired Penruddocke.

"Nothing that I cannot do as well by post," replied the lady demurely.

"Ever hear of a place called the Savoy?"

"It is five years since we were there—together," said Mrs. Mardale, reproaching him from under the lace of her parasol.

"Won't be more than five minutes

before we are there again," declared Penruddocke, hailing a passing hansom.

"John would be furious!" murmured Mrs. Mardale, placing her foot on the step.

"Don't worry about John. He has you the other three hundred and sixty-four days. The Savoy!" he called to the driver. "George! It seems good to be in a hansom again—and with you, Sibyl!"

"Oh, Pip, you mustn't call me 'Sibyl' any more. I'm a respectable old married lady now. I—I didn't mean to call you 'Pip'; I think it was the hansom."

"Bully old hansom!" murmured Penruddocke, patting the doors approvingly. He contemplated Mrs. Mardale's profile for a moment. "Lord, how healthy you look!" he exclaimed at length. "I have seen none but the leathery ones for years, but this"—he patted her cheek—"is the real thing."

"Pip!" cried Mrs. Mardale, drawing her head away.

"If it were only five years ago and a dark night, and if we were on our way to Waterloo in a hansom—" He paused.

"Pip!"

"They didn't have so many beastly electric lights then!"

"Pip Penruddocke, if you are going to hark back to those days I shall not lunch with you! You know you had forgotten all about it long ago."

The Captain made no response to this challenge.

"Hadn't you forgotten all about it long ago?"

Penruddocke chewed his mustache in silence.

"Ha—hadn't you, really, truly?"

A white-gloved hand was placed on his arm.

"Here we are at the Savoy," explained Penruddocke, rising and helping Mrs. Mardale out of the cab.

When they were seated, and while Penruddocke was studying the menu, Mrs. Mardale said softly:

"Hadn't you, Pip?"

"Damn!" cried the Captain so fiercely that the waiter jumped and then coughed gently.

"Pip!"

Penruddocke scribbled an order and handed it to the waiter.

"You know jolly well I shall never forget," he said slowly; "but you never cared. Just as soon as old Mardale screwed up his courage—"

"Pip, you never said anything—"

"I wasn't such a cad," growled Penruddocke. "I didn't have any coin. Old Mardale seemed to be just the card."

"And I wasn't certain—"

"Damn'd sight better off," interrupted Penruddocke.

"I wasn't certain whether you cared."

Mrs. Mardale looked at him and raised her eyebrows.

Penruddocke immediately wilted.

"Sibyl," he said huskily, "Sibyl, on my soul I did care, and—and do. But, anyway, old Mardale got the tart, so," he smiled, "let's eat, drink and have a good time."

"When are you coming down to Chiltern?" inquired Mrs. Mardale presently.

"When are you going to have the other jolly people?"

"I'll get rid of the frumps and have them next week if you'll come."

"Do you suppose John will be glad to see me?"

Mrs. Mardale laughed gently.

"John is very nearsighted," she replied. "He is also growing quite deaf," she added with a little sigh.

"Couldn't he go away for his health, or something?" Penruddocke looked very much concerned.

"He never goes away, and his health is remarkably good, thank you."

"Don't mention it. Have another *pâté*. No? Well, I suppose we'll have to put up with him."

"Pip! We are talking horribly. This place and the hansom have quite demoralized me. John is a good old soul and lets me do just as I please."

"Don't you suppose he would like to adopt a poor, homeless dragoon? May I smoke?"

"Of course—I mean, of course you may smoke. No, I don't believe John would care to have you there all the time. But I must go or I shall miss my

train." She looked at her watch as she spoke.

"S'pose I'd better not go to the station with you. Never used to—you remember that?"

Mrs. Mardale slowly drew on her gloves.

"Except that one dark night—Don't look at me like that. Pip!"

"Good-bye. Address me at the club as usual," said Penruddocke, as he put her into a hansom.

"Next week, remember!" called out Mrs. Mardale, as the cabby flicked his horse and the hansom disappeared down Northumberland Avenue.

The next few days were spent by Penruddocke in accumulating a large and varied supply of garments, and a week later, in response to a formal invitation from Mrs. Mardale, he went to Chiltern. At the station he found his hostess waiting in a tiny basket phaeton which was attached to a diminutive but restless pony.

"One doesn't have to have a groom with this," said Mrs. Mardale in explanation.

"Hardly, unless he carried it, I should think. Whom have you got?" he added, as he tried to accommodate the great length of his legs to the exceeding brevity of space allotted to them.

"I have been fairly fortunate—Your luggage will be brought up. I have the Bensons—"

"Both of them at the same time?"

"Yes. They don't get along a bit well, but I've got Major Blakeley for her—"

"Thought Blakeley was in jail!"

"And Lady Newcombe for him. Lady Newcombe you don't know. She is pretty but enormous, and uses the most awful language. And then there's Miss Gaunt and Lord Erskine—"

"Together?"

"Most of the time. You remember her—all bones and intensesness? Then, too, I have a dear little, sweet, innocent girl for you. And that's all."

"Sounds good," said Penruddocke judiciously—"all except the little girl. I am a little old for toys."

"But she is charming and pretty, and

is quite prepared to adore you. I hope you will be nice to her."

"I shall—but how about John?"

"John has—me," said Mrs. Mardale, giving the unoffending pony a sharp cut with the whip.

"Of course," agreed Penruddocke.

They turned in through the big gates to the park, and the pony, realizing that his labors were almost over, picked his way slowly and gingerly over the gravel up the winding drive which led to Chiltern Hall.

"Good thick growth of timber—no electric lights—pony can't see—no one can see." Captain Penruddocke put his arms around Mrs. Mardale and kissed her.

"Oh, Pip!" she whispered, as she pushed him away. "I should not have allowed you to do that—but I *am* so glad to see you!"

"Do I have to kiss the little girl?" inquired Penruddocke, as they drove up to the front door, where Mr. Mardale was waiting to receive them.

"Good gracious, no! I don't believe she would ever get over it. Here we are, John, at last. Dumpkins is getting lazier every day; he insisted on walking most of the way."

Mr. Mardale came down the steps and helped his wife out of the phaeton, after which he held out his hand to Captain Penruddocke.

"Glad to be back in England, I suppose?" he said, as they entered the house together.

"Rather!" exclaimed Penruddocke. "The old Hall looks about the same."

"Yes; it doesn't change much. You'll find some of your friends in the smoking room. I, unfortunately, have to attend a magistrate's meeting. Sibyl has evidently stopped to feed Dumpkins with sugar, and yet she complains of his laziness!" He smiled and walked away.

Captain Penruddocke strode across the broad hall to the half-opened door of the smoking room, and stood there for a moment listening with an amused smile. When he entered he was received with shouts of welcome, and was immediately surrounded by a noisy, congratulating crowd.

"Good old Pip to come back to us!"

"Missed you awfully! Must meet Lady Newcombe. Come, we'll all introduce you!"

He was led across the room to a large bow window, where Lady Newcombe was ensconced with a banjo in her hand. She was a large, dazzlingly fair woman, with bold, coal-black eyes and brilliant coloring. It was hinted that she had been more intimate with the beer pump than with the ethics of society before she married Sir Charles Newcombe, but she always explained that she spent her younger days in Australia, where her father was a banker. She laid down the banjo and made room for Penruddocke to sit beside her.

"Sit right down here, Captain," she said. "I'll protect you from these hoodlums."

"Thank you," said Penruddocke, seating himself. "I am rather overcome by this cordial reception. Ah, here comes Miss Gaunt!"

"I knew she couldn't keep away long. Do you like her?" Lady Newcombe spoke in a whisper.

"Ye-es, I think I do. I've known her for a long time."

"I hate her!" Lady Newcombe picked up the banjo and twanged it viciously. "She's always slurring at me. She asked me how I managed to keep my hair always the same color! And it's natural—I'll take my oath. Let me get you a brandy and soda. I simply can't stand that girl!"

She rose and crossed the room to the sideboard, as Miss Gaunt came up with long, slow strides. Penruddocke laughed.

"Well, Alice," he said, "I see you are still true to Erskine."

"Oh, yes," she sighed. "We are still as congenial as ever. He is a dear fellow, and he understands me, which is a comfort, you know." She smiled. "Where is Sibyl?"

"She is remonstrating with the pony, I believe."

"How—how glad you must have been to see her! And what a romantic drive you must have had!"

"First rate." Penruddocke was gazing into the distance, where there was a

cozy corner. "Who's that pretty girl over there? I don't think I know her."

"That's Miss Featherstone. Isn't she pretty! Her mother was a great friend of Sibyl's. She is very young and rather out of place here, where Lady Newcombe monopolizes the conversation."

"Don't you like Lady Newcombe? I think she's rather pretty." Penruddocke tried to look as if he meant it.

"Pretty! Oh, of course—you're a man! She's a handsome animal, and has an equivalent amount of refinement. She plays the banjo, and shoots in knickerbockers! She's longing for September to come so that she can wear them. There she comes now, but, thank goodness, Sibyl is with her. Now you will be happy!" She looked up at him archly.

"Oh, yes, of course; but I'm always happy, you know."

Miss Gaunt held up a long, bony finger and turned away.

"Come, Captain Penruddocke," said Mrs. Mardale; "I want to introduce you to Miss Featherstone—the nice little girl, you know."

"Charmed," said Penruddocke with such alacrity that Mrs. Mardale turned and looked at him in surprise.

"Good boy!" she said after a moment. "You may come back to me after you have made friends with Bertha."

They walked together over to the cozy corner, where Miss Featherstone was playing with a tiny Japanese spaniel. She looked up with a slight blush when Mrs. Mardale said:

"Bertha, this is Captain Penruddocke. You have heard me speak of him. You two must be good friends." She intercepted Lady Newcombe, who was sailing up with a brandy and soda in her hand, and taking her arm, led her across the room.

"Who's for the meadows?" she cried.

"All of us!" was the unanimous reply, and there was a general rush to the French windows, which opened on to a large stone terrace.

The meadows were about a mile from the Hall and almost in the center of Chiltern Park. These ten acres of pas-

ture land were the pride of Surrey and an everlasting source of joy and employment to Mr. Mardale. Here his celebrated Norfolk cattle grazed and posed for the admiration which they had come to feel to be their due; and at eventide, when they lay in picturesque groups at the bases of gigantic oaks, and the long shadows crept across from the west, the scene was surely a restful and enticing one. From the terrace a winding path, cut through dense shrubbery, led to the meadows and then continued its way around them, shaded all the way by an avenue of large box trees. At intervals seats, accurately calculated to accommodate not more than two, were placed, and many a tale these seats could tell if they wished.

As her guests left the room Mrs. Mardale turned and looked at Captain Penruddocke expectantly. He, however, appeared to be engrossed in Miss Featherstone's conversation, and did not catch her glance. She uttered a nervous little laugh and followed the others.

Penruddocke took the Japanese spaniel on his knee and pulled its ears.

"How do you like it here, Miss Featherstone?" he said.

"It is a perfectly lovely place, and Mr. and Mrs. Mardale are as nice as they can be, but I can't quite understand the other people."

"Do you mean understand, or—stand?"

Miss Featherstone laughed.

"You see," she said, "I have never been to one of these house parties before, and it seems to me rather—well, the women don't care what they say, and the men *do* seem to drink so much. Sibyl says I'll get used to it—"

"God forbid!" muttered Penruddocke.

"And she says that if one is quiet and doesn't make coarse remarks everybody thinks one is immoral!"

Penruddocke tweaked the spaniel's ear and it uttered a little squeak of protest.

"Miss Featherstone," he said, "you go home and play with your dolls a few years longer."

Miss Featherstone jumped up.

"I don't think that is a bit nice of you!" she said indignantly.

"Why not?"

"I'm not such a baby as you think. Lord Erskine said last night that I was 'devilish smart.'"

"Do you like Erskine?"

"I think he's detestable! He—he tried to k-kiss me last evening!" Miss Featherstone walked toward the French windows. "All the others have gone out," she added.

"What did you do when he tried to k-kiss you?"

Miss Featherstone looked over her shoulder at him and laughed.

"I went and told Miss Gaunt."

Penruddocke laughed, too, and rose, and together they went out on the terrace.

"I dare say, after all, you can take care of yourself. Shall we stroll down to the meadows? I have not luxuriated in them for five long, weary years."

As they followed the path they came at intervals upon couples on different seats, Lord Erskine and Miss Gaunt on one, Major Blakeley and Mrs. Benson on another, and, farther on, Mr. Benson and Lady Newcombe.

"They always do this," said Miss Featherstone. "They pair off as soon as breakfast is over."

"It's a habit," declared Penruddocke. "They have been doing it for years. Wonder they never want to swap off."

They came upon Mrs. Mardale, who was leaning with her elbows on the top of the fence, watching the cattle.

"Well," she said, as Miss Featherstone and Penruddocke joined her, "have you decided to like each other?"

"Captain Penruddocke has been very nice to me," said Bertha; "but I know he must be tired of me by this time, so I am going to write some letters." She started toward the Hall.

"Not at all, not at all!" replied Penruddocke hurriedly; then, as she ran off, shaking her head and laughing, he remarked to Mrs. Mardale, "Nice girl!"

"She's too nice for you to make love to, Pip; so don't you try it! Remember, I expect to see something of you, too."

"Never make serious love to anyone but you. Don't think this is a good place for that girl, though."

Mrs. Mardale turned and looked at him in surprise.

"What do you mean?"

"Corrupt her morals. Blakeley's got his eye on her."

"What do you know about morals?"

"Have read a lot about them. Expect she can take care of herself, though."

"You seem to be very much interested in her already!" Mrs. Mardale tapped her foot on the lowest bar of the fence.

"Thought you wanted me to be nice to her. Don't get rumped, Sibyl; I'm not gone on the girl!" He put his arm around Sibyl's waist, but she pushed him away petulantly.

"You must not do that, Captain Penruddocke. Please remember that I am married."

Penruddocke looked at her with a smile on his lips.

"I am expecting an important telegram calling me away tomorrow," he said.

"Don't be stupid!"

"I am positively certain that telegram will come—Mrs. Mardale." He blew some smoke in the face of an inquisitive calf who was poking its head through the fence.

"Well, it will be horrid of you, after I have got these people here on purpose for you."

"Don't care so much about the people; I came to see you."

"Well?"

"And then, when I do this"—Penruddocke again put his arm around her waist—"you—you—Oh, my, you were a haughty lady!"

Mrs. Mardale leaned her head back on his arm and looked up at him.

"I am so happy, Pip, when I am with you—and so afraid!"

"Afraid! What of?" He kissed the upturned face.

"That's what I'm afraid of!" Sibyl tore herself from his arm and walked quickly to a bench, where she sat down and covered her face with her hands.

Presently she rose and looked across the meadows.

"It must be time to dress for dinner," she said. "Come on."

She started up the path toward the Hall, followed by Penruddocke, who stared at her in a dazed sort of way. When they had walked thus for a short distance Mrs. Mardale suddenly turned and stamped her foot.

"I—I shall send that Featherstone girl home!" she cried. Then she threw her arms round Penruddocke's neck and sobbed.

He held her close to him for a moment, patting her softly on the head; then he suddenly pushed her away. "'Ware Gaunt girl!" he whispered.

Sibyl turned and saw Alice Gaunt sauntering in their direction with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"Lost anything?" called Mrs. Mardale.

Miss Gaunt looked up in palpably affected surprise.

"No," she said languidly, "I haven't missed anything." She laughed. "They were all wondering what had become of you, so I volunteered to come to tell you it is time to dress. I sent Erskine round the other way; I must go and meet him." She kissed the tips of her long fingers, and passed on.

"Pip," said Mrs. Mardale in a horrified whisper, "she saw us!"

"Spect so," replied Penruddocke gloomily, pulling his mustache.

"She won't mention it, but she'll make us feel that she knows. And"—Mrs. Mardale burst into a shout of laughter—"only last night I gave her a maternal talking to about Erskine!"

"Do you suppose Erskine intends to marry her?"

"She scoffs at matrimony, but his mother declares they've got to do something soon. She can't bear Alice, but she says the only way to cure Erskine of his mad infatuation for the Gaunt girl is to marry him to her!"

"I recognize her style," said Penruddocke, laughing.

As they went up the steps to the terrace they met Mr. Mardale, who was already dressed for dinner.

"You will have to hurry, Sibyl," he said. "You have barely half an hour to dress in."

"You shouldn't make the meadows so attractive," said Penruddocke as Sibyl ran into the house. "Those cattle seem to be in fine fettle."

Mr. Mardale smiled and rubbed his hands with glee at this praise of his pets, and after Captain Penruddocke had left him, stood looking dreamily in the direction of the meadows.

Penruddocke took Miss Featherstone in to dinner that evening.

"I am to consider this a great compliment, Miss Gaunt says," declared Bertha, nodding her head at Penruddocke.

"Miss Gaunt would be muzzled if she were a dog." Penruddocke raised his glass in response to Alice, who was toasting him across the table.

"And yet you drink her health!"

"She isn't muzzled yet."

"She seems to take a good deal of interest in you," said Bertha slowly.

"She is a remarkably efficient other-people's-business woman. Has she been talking to you about me?"

"Oh, only when I was walking with her to tell you and Mrs. Mardale—"

Here Captain Penruddocke upset a glass of wine.

"Di—did you?" he stammered.

"I only went as far as—part of the way," replied Bertha, crumbling her bread. "But she said that you were labeled, 'No trespassing!' What do you suppose she meant?"

Penruddocke turned and stared at her for a moment.

"I wish I knew," he said desperately.

"What?" inquired Miss Featherstone, gazing at him innocently. "Do you mean about the 'No trespassing'?"

"No," said Penruddocke decidedly.

"I wish Major Blakeley wouldn't stare at me so; it makes Mrs. Benson furious."

"Blakeley's a beast! Look here," he went on quickly; "you ought to get out of this place."

"Why? I am just beginning to enjoy it."

"That's it; you mustn't enjoy this sort of thing. Dash it all, you're

too—" He stopped short and looked at Mrs. Mardale.

"I don't care whether you're labeled or not, Captain Penruddocke, I like you!" Bertha held out her hand, which Penruddocke shook heartily.

"A bet?" inquired Mrs. Mardale, as she rose to leave the room with the other ladies. As she passed Penruddocke's chair she whispered:

"If you can spare a moment from Bertha, come out on the terrace when you have finished your wine."

Penruddocke nodded and seated himself again. He sat for a few moments staring at the door through which Mrs. Mardale had disappeared; then, rising and putting his hand on Mr. Mardale's shoulder, he said:

"I don't want any more wine, so I think I'll go and cheer up the ladies."

On the terrace in the moonlight he found Mrs. Mardale.

"Oh, you *did* come," she said.

"Sibyl," he replied with conviction, "you're sickening for something."

"What do you mean?"

"Measles, I think." Penruddocke was addressing the moon. "Or, perhaps, it's thrush," he added after deliberation.

Mrs. Mardale burst out laughing.

"You really are too absurd. I am very angry with you, though; you never spoke a word to me all through dinner. I don't believe you even looked at me!"

The crescendoing twang of a banjo, accompanied by little outbursts of song in varying keys, announced the approach of Lady Newcombe.

"Got a wrap?" said Penruddocke quickly.

"Yes." Mrs. Mardale rose.

"Let's go for a walk." He stepped up to one of the windows and looked in. "Gaunt girl's playing cat's cradle with Erskine, and Blakeley's entertaining Miss Featherstone with one of his usual stories."

He draped a shawl gently around Mrs. Mardale's shoulders, and they walked down the stone steps and disappeared in the shadows. As they stood in the silence, awed by the exceeding beauty of the night, across the trees

floated the twang of the banjo and a chorus of voices proclaiming:

"They went to sea in a sieve, they did;
In a sieve they went to sea!"

"That's what we're doing, Pip," said Sibyl; "we're going to sea in a sieve!" She led him into the moonlight, placed a hand on each side of his face and drew it down, while she looked into his eyes steadily, searchingly. Then her arms fell about his neck, and she drew him closer, closer, until he could feel the feverish beating of her heart. Her lips pressed his in one long soul-giving kiss, until at last, with a little sigh, her head drooped gently and found a resting place.

"Beastly bore," remarked Penruddocke the next morning at breakfast after he had read his letters.

"What?" inquired Sibyl.

"Greville wants me to ride his horse at Aldershot today."

"Shall you do it?" asked Sibyl, rather anxiously.

"Yes, I think so. I must telegraph him at once, as this was forwarded from town."

"Got your riding togs?" inquired Lady Newcombe.

"Never travel without them," said Penruddocke, scribbling a telegram on the back of an envelope.

"Perhaps Lady Newcombe was going to offer her knickerbockers!" suggested Miss Gaunt.

"I'll bet you a sov. you daren't wear them!" shouted Lady Newcombe—which retort filled Major Blakeley with joy.

"I'll give odds!" he cried. "How are you betting, Erskine?"

Their hostess interposed at this point.

"We'll all drive over and make a day of it," she said. "We'll have to make an early start. Will you all be ready to go in an hour?"

There was a unanimous and cheerful agreement to the plan, and after the others had scattered to dress for the expedition, Mrs. Mardale said to Penruddocke:

"I wish you were not going to ride."
"Why?"

"It's a steeplechase, and—" She rose and stood looking out of the window.

"Lord, Sibyl," cried Penruddocke, "I've ridden hundreds of steeplechases, and I've never been killed yet that I know of! You used to like to see me ride."

"I know, but oh, Pip, you are—well"—she went over to the door—"if you were not a man, you would see that it is different now."

He whistled softly for a moment. "I wonder," he said, "I wonder if the little girl would care?" Then he crossed the hall and went slowly up the wide staircase.

When he came down, with his kit bag in his hand, he found the coach already at the door, with its passengers on board waiting for him with various degrees of patience.

"I'm giving the box seat to Bertha going over," said Mrs. Mardale, "but you shall have me coming home."

Penruddocke took the reins, climbed up, and with Mr. Benson displaying his only accomplishment in a series of toots on the horn, they rolled gaily down the drive. Mr. Mardale, who was busily spudding up weeds on the lawn, waved to them as they swept by. As they left the village and were slowly climbing a steep and winding hill to the downs, Penruddocke turned to Miss Featherstone.

"Like coaching?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied. "How well you drive! Do you ride as well?"

"I can ride a bit. Going to bet on me today?"

"I don't bet; but I'll wish you good luck. It will be so exciting to know someone who is riding. Isn't it awfully dangerous, though?" She looked up at him inquiringly.

"There are other things which are more dangerous!"

"For instance?"

"Nice little girls." He flushed slightly as he spoke.

"I am sorry you said that. If you make any more remarks like that you'll spoil the drive for me."

Penruddocke gathered up the reins as they turned onto the downs and

cut the off leader viciously on the shoulder.

"Lazy brute!" he growled. Then he turned to Bertha, who had given a little gasp when he hit the unoffending horse.

"I beg your pardon for losing my temper; only—I meant what I said, you know!"

Miss Featherstone was looking straight ahead, though, at the narrow grassy road which, fringed with copse, spread for miles before them. The horses in their joy at the springy turf capered and larked, or shied playfully in feigned alarm when a rabbit scampered across almost under their feet. A covey of partridges, unaware of their approaching doom, rose and whirled up the avenue, exposing themselves in a reckless manner, and at intervals a pompous cock pheasant strutted out from the bracken and listened inquiringly to the jingling of the chains, after which he ran with all his might in plain view for ten or twenty feet and then swerved suddenly into the brush again to tell his family all about it.

"Isn't it lovely!" said Bertha with a little sigh, clasping her hands and breathing in the sweet, fern-scented air.

The ringing of glasses and the twang of Lady Newcombe's ubiquitous banjo were evidence that the other passengers had begun to enjoy themselves, and it was only after he had thrown the reins to the grooms and the coach was being parked that Penruddocke had an opportunity to say to Bertha under cover of Lady Newcombe's rendering of, "My Love She is a Loidy":

"Going to give me a talisman?"

Bertha looked up at him.

"Don't you think you had better ask Mrs. Mardale for that?" she said quietly, as his eyes turned away from her steady gaze.

"You—you saw—last evening?" he stammered.

"Yes, I saw!" She laughed. "I—I have seen a good many things at Chiltern Hall. I think it is all horrid, and I shall not go back this evening."

"You can't very well stay here." Penruddocke waved his hand comprehensively in the direction of the camp.

"Oh, yes, I can. Don't you know that my father commands the sappers, and that I live here?"

"I didn't know it, but I am glad to hear it, as I expect to be stationed here."

Bertha bowed smilingly to a man who was making his way slowly through the crowd.

"Oh, there is Major Greville!" she cried delightedly.

"Yes; I'm going to ride his horse. S'pose he's coming to talk it over."

"He is coming to talk to me," replied Bertha with conviction.

"Aren't you glad that I am to be stationed here?" asked Penruddocke, as Bertha shook hands with Major Greville.

She spoke a few words to the newcomer before she answered; then, looking over her shoulder and nodding her head toward Mrs. Mardale, she said smilingly: "It will be nice for her!"

Penruddocke pulled off his gloves with a series of vicious tugs, and climbing down, told one of the grooms to take his kit bag to the dressing room. Then he called out: "Come, Greville, I haven't much time. I'd like to have a look at your nag."

As Major Greville moved toward him, shaking hands with the others on the way, Mrs. Mardale called out: "Captain Penruddocke, may I speak to you?"

He went and helped her down from the coach, and they walked away a few steps together.

"You—you will be careful, Pip, won't you?" she said.

Penruddocke glanced in the direction of the coach and saw that Miss Featherstone was looking at them and smiling.

"Dash it all, Sibyl," he said irritably, "you're enough to make a man nervous!"

She looked toward Bertha meaningly. "So romantic! Love at first sight, eh?" She laughed bitterly.

Penruddocke held out his hand. "Hope you'll come and pull me out of the ditch, all the same," he said, smiling. "Greville, is that beast of yours very dangerous? Mrs. Mardale fears for my neck."

"Portia will never fall if you keep her

going," answered Greville. "She's the best jumper in the country, Mrs. Mardale. Penruddocke has a simple walk-over."

"Then all put your money up on us!" shouted Penruddocke, as he raised his hat and turned to go with Greville. As they passed Bertha, she leaned down and whispered to Penruddocke: "Keep her going!"

He looked up and flushed, and again raising his hat, strode off toward the paddock. As he left, Mrs. Mardale climbed up and sat beside Bertha.

"That," she said, pointing up the course, "is the water jump. We shall have a good view of it from here."

"I am glad," replied Bertha. "I always think that is the most exciting part of it."

"Aren't you nervous?" asked Mrs. Mardale, looking at her critically.

Bertha scribbled on the margin of her racing card.

"Nervous?" she said. "Why?"

"I thought you liked Captain Penruddocke."

Bertha looked up at her. "I do very much, but not enough to feel nervous about him. Ah! I see they're starting the first race!"

She stood up and waved her hand as the horses sped past. "There's Mr. Lyttleton on that gray horse; doesn't he ride beautifully?"

Mrs. Mardale felt a hand on her arm, and turning, she found Miss Gaunt leaning over her.

"Companions in misery?" inquired Miss Gaunt in a whisper.

"Why don't you try to say something nice sometimes?" said Mrs. Mardale, frowning. "Anyway, I don't know what you mean."

"I didn't mean anything, but"—she pointed at Bertha's back—"she does!"

Bertha turned round at this moment.

"Mr. Lyttleton won!" she cried delightedly. "Why, I don't believe you people even saw the race!"

"We're keeping all our enthusiasm for Captain Penruddocke," said Miss Gaunt. "Of course, you are not as interested as we are!"

Bertha bit her lip.

"The next time Lord Erskine tries to kiss me, I don't believe I shall tell you," she said.

Lady Newcombe, who had been watching Bertha for some moments, now called out: "Come over here and sit by me, Miss Featherstone; the men have all gone to lose their money, and I am desolate."

After Bertha had climbed over and was seated beside her, she put her arm around the girl's waist and hugged her. "You just sit here," she said, "until it's over. That Gaunt girl is a she devil!"

A tiny tear came into each of Bertha's eyes as she leaned her head against Lady Newcombe's expansive bosom.

"I—I haven't done anything," she sobbed gently.

"Well, then, go right ahead and do it," said Lady Newcombe, patting her on the back. She looked up the course and then stood up, holding Bertha's hand in a manly grasp.

"They're getting ready to start the steeplechase," she said. "Stand up and hang on to me."

Bertha rose, and through her glasses saw the horses passing and plunging, while the starter was vainly trying to get them into something approximating a straight line. She recognized Penruddocke in Greville's colors on an enormous gray mare, and she smiled as she noticed that he seemed to be having no trouble with his mount.

"They've started!" said Mrs. Mardale. "How beautifully he rides her!" For Penruddocke had taken the first hurdle. "Portia is leading!" she cried out a moment later. "Oh, she took that hedge like a bird!"

Bertha turned for a moment.

"They have to go round twice, so it doesn't really make so much difference who is leading now," she said quietly.

Lady Newcombe squeezed her hand hard.

"Hurrah for Penruddocke!" she shouted. "Did you see him take that in-and-out? 'Oh, my love's a bold sojer boy!' I'll bet my boots on Penruddocke!"

"How about your knickerbock—" began Miss Gaunt.

"I'll bet them, too! Ladies, please give your kind and undivided attention to the water jump." She put her arm around Bertha. "Don't want you to fall overboard in the excitement!" she said.

Penruddocke, well in the van, with the huge mare extending herself and gathering impetu with every stride, came pounding down to the water jump. As he neared it Mrs. Mardale involuntarily covered her eyes with her hands, but Bertha, conscious of Miss Gaunt's eagle eye, stood without a tremor, with her field glasses up. Only, her lips parted in one word, "Now!" as Portia rose in the air with her head stretched out and her hindlegs tucked well in under her. As the mare landed cleanly on the turf, with the ditch behind her, and sped on without a perceptible break in her stride, a cheer arose all along the course.

"It's all over but the shouting!" declared Lady Newcombe. "There goes one poor fellow for a swim! We can get our breath now until they come around again."

As they raced along, the mare taking hurdle and fence and wall without a mistake and leaving the "field" rapidly farther and farther in the hopeless rear, Penruddocke patted Portia on the neck and took a little pull at her mouth.

"Easy, old lady!" he said. "Must keep something for the finish. Little girl will be pleased if we win."

The mare shook her head impatiently and took a firmer hold on the bit.

"Oh, I know you've got it in you, bless your heart!" said Penruddocke, crushing her with his knees and drawing his heels well back as they negotiated a relentless-looking stone wall. "But we don't want any accidents before the gallery." He turned in the saddle and looked back.

"Lord!" he cried. "This is just a constitutional in the park for you, Portia! It's a regular Sunday out for you, old lady!" Then, as the mare plastered her little ears down flat, "Oh, don't like being called an old lady, eh?" He laughed and pulled her down almost to a canter. "No use pumping you out

in such company. Grand National's about your size! Now tell me something, Portia—you should be wise with such a name." They turned in sight of the coach again as he spoke. "I think I love one lady, and another lady thinks she loves me; which is it to be, Portia?"

Portia shook her head in remonstrance, and fought hard to lengthen her stride; but Penruddocke's forehead was wrinkled—his mind was occupied with uncomfortable thoughts—and he did not take Portia's patent advice.

At this moment, Bertha with white face and staring eyes, cried out: "Good heavens! He isn't going fast enough! Where is Major Greville? Oh, there he is!" as the Major came dashing by on a polo pony. "He isn't keeping her going!" she screamed hysterically.

"I know. I'm just off to wake up the fool!" shouted Greville, as he jammed in his spurs, and the pony, after a preliminary squeal and kick of protest, scurried up the course.

Now it may be that she was piqued at Penruddocke's injudicious reference to the other ladies, or, that, femininely, she sulked because she had not been allowed to have her own way, but the fact remains that when the Captain awoke to Greville's frenzied warning and the unpleasant proximity of the water jump, and strove to work the mare into her stride again, she absolutely refused to respond.

"Look here," muttered Penruddocke, desperately driving in the spurs, "you can't do any fooling over this jump! Get out of this!" He brought his whip down on her shoulder.

Portia was furious. With a snort she set her teeth hard on the bit and dashed onward to the water jump, too blind with rage and wounded dignity to judge distance with any degree of accuracy. Wherefore there arose from women at the edge of the course, and especially from those on a certain coach, suppressed screams as the mare was seen to take off much too late, rap the bars with her forelegs and gracefully turn a semi-somersault over the water before landing on the far bank on her back with Penruddocke under her.

In a moment a dozen men were at hand, one firmly ensconced on Portia's protesting head, while the others dragged the unconscious rider away from her. As the mare commenced her aerial act, Bertha, taking Lady Newcombe unawares, bumped her ponderously and forcibly down on the seat, and, barely touching the steps, was on the ground and speeding to the scene of the accident. Lady Newcombe gasped, both for breath and from surprise, and then laid violent hands on Mrs. Mardale, who was evidently about to follow Bertha's lead.

"Don't *you* make an idiot of yourself, too!" she said. Then, looking in the direction in which Bertha had fled, she cried: "Gad! She's huggin' the horse!"

Which was true. For, when Bertha, utterly bereft of breath, reached the spot where the Captain was being investigated by a doctor, and discovered that the damage to him consisted only of a few crumpled ribs, she turned sharply to a plump subaltern, who was still obeying orders by sitting on the mare's head, and said imperiously: "Get off her head! Is she badly hurt?"

"Doesn't behave like it; been trying to chew my leg," answered the officer, rising cautiously and touching his cap.

Bertha held the reins while Portia struggled to her feet, after which the girl threw her arms round the trembling mare's neck.

"I'm so thankful you didn't break your neck, Portia dear!" she whispered. Then she turned to the men, who had placed Pendruddocke on a stretcher, and saw that Major Greville was at the Captain's side. "Tell them to take him to father's quarters," she said, "and send the trap for me."

When she rejoined the others she found the coach surrounded by sympathizing and inquiring friends. The good news of the Captain's escape from serious injury had brought smiles to Mrs. Mardale's face, and she received Bertha very graciously.

"It was so spontaneous of you to rush over to him like that!" she said.

"I—I have to say good-bye, and to

thank you for a good time," replied Bertha, nodding to Lady Newcombe, who was figuratively waving her hat in the air.

"Why? Aren't you going back with us this evening?" Mrs. Mardale raised her eyebrows.

"No." Bertha hesitated a moment. "You see," she went on, "as Captain Penruddocke has been taken to father's quarters—"

Mrs. Mardale stared at her. Then she laughed hysterically.

"Alice," she said to Miss Gaunt, "isn't it too romantic for anything! Miss Featherstone has had poor Captain Penruddocke taken to her father's quarters!"

Miss Gaunt clasped her hands.

"How like a book!" she said. "And you will grow wan and pale nursing him!" She bent down and whispered to Bertha. "I *will* give you credit for being a clever little thing!"

Bertha blushed. "Of course, he will have orderlies," she replied quietly, "but both father and I will do what we can."

"At least," said Mrs. Mardale, "you will write and let us know how it—I mean he—is getting on?"

At this point Lady Newcombe laboriously climbed down and grasped Bertha's hand.

"I'm mighty sorry you're not going back with us, but"—here she reduced her voice to what she believed to be a whisper—"you've got a better right to him than anybody. You go ahead!"

Bertha laughed and shook her head. "You don't any of you understand," she said. "There is my trap!" she exclaimed, as a groom in a dogcart drove up and touched his hat. She shook hands with Mrs. Mardale. "Thank you again," she said; "and please tell Mr. Mardale I hope to see him again soon. I shall write very often." She waved to the others, stepped into the dogcart and was soon out of sight.

Lady Newcombe planted her feet well apart and addressed the company.

"I don't know how you all feel about it," she said, "but I think this has ceased to be amusing. If Mr. Benson

can drive as well as he can toot, I'll risk my life with him."

The suggestion was agreed to without a vote, but the homeward journey was a melancholy one for Mrs. Mardale, and even Lady Newcombe's comments on the peculiarities of Mr. Benson's driving failed to amuse her.

Bertha kept her promise and daily sent bulletins of the Captain's progress to Chiltern, but she did not record a conversation which occurred when the patient, now convalescent, was about to leave Colonel Featherstone's hospitable roof. Bertha was watering the little window gardens, when Penruddocke came up behind her.

"I must go this afternoon," he said. "I have put you to an awful lot of trouble, I am afraid."

Bertha turned and smiled.

"You have been a Godsend to father," she said; "he loves to have someone to fuss over. I am very glad to see you well again."

Penruddocke stood looking at the girl.

"Little girl," he said quickly, "it's awfully hard for me to go away."

"You mustn't talk like that," replied Bertha quietly.

"Why not? Lord knows I love you, and—"

Bertha turned around quickly.

"Captain Penruddocke! After what I saw that evening?"

"But you seemed anxious about the race, and you came over—"

"I came over on account of the mare. I was anxious about the race because you were riding Alfred's—Major Greville's—horse. I am engaged to Major Greville. I—I would have told you about it before, only it—it only happened last night."

Bertha burst into tears.

Penruddocke cleared his throat as though he were about to speak, but instead he marched out of the room whistling softly.



INCONSISTENCY

By ROY TEMPLE HOUSE

WE never name her but to praise,
The ante-bellum maid,
So fond of old and quiet ways,
So calm, demure and staid.

But why we slight our maids today
I'm sure I can't surmise,
Although we know as well as they
That they are stayed, likewise.



HOW easy it would be for a man to remain in love with his wife if he had only married somebody else!

EPOCHS

By RALPH M. THOMSON

O H, DRINK to the infant blossom
That laughs in the lap of Spring—
To the newborn rose,
Ere a petal knows
The touch of an unclean thing!
For love is like as a flower,
And life as an angel song
In the lifting gray
Of that vernal day
When hope in the heart is strong.

A toast to the sun-glad Summer,
That trips to a zephyr's tune—
To the fair, young fay
Of the yesterday,
Full-blown on the breast of June!
A brimming cup to the season
Of infinite afterglows,
When the stress of strife
Is apart from life,
And love is a thornless rose!

A health to the stirruped Autumn,
Awaiting to hear the call
Of the plaintive note
That a feathered throat
Shall trill when the last leaves fall!
I lift my glass to the crimson,
And sip its depth to the gold,
For there's something grand
In a love life-spanned,
That mellows as Time grows old.

And here's to the chill December,
Its winds and its tombs of snow—
To the one who weeps
Where a still heart sleeps,
To the lone soul left to woe!
There's untold sweet in the budding;
There's more in the full-blown rose,
But the love I toast
Of all love the most,
Lives even beyond life's close.

ONE TOUCH OF NATURE

By R. K. WEEKES

WANDESFORD threw away the end of his cigar with a sigh, stretched himself and got up. Conscience was reminding him that it was not seemly, on this night of all nights, to leave his bride too long alone, but it must be owned that he felt no warm impulse toward her at the moment. She had come down to dinner in a black dress, to the evident amazement of the unsophisticated country maid who waited on them. Miss Daisy Evans had not been noted for her observance of the conventions, but her husband felt that Lady Sydney Wandesford should have had better taste; he hated to be made conspicuous. Qualms came over him, not for the first time that day, as he stood on the hearth rug screwing up proper feelings, but he suppressed them with a firm hand. He was thirty-eight years old. He had recently been elected member for Darenth, and his illustrious chief had advised him, with a significance that Wandesford perfectly understood, to marry and settle down in his constituency.

"Confound it all, if I've got to be respectable I will be respectable!" he said to himself with a shrug and a grimace. "Daisy's correct enough for anything, and so is her money. I can't stand the cowlike type of woman, so I must put up with a few originalities. After all, she does look shamelessly pretty in black."

The bride was sitting by the fire, supporting her cheek on her hand. She did not look around when her husband opened the door. He had a glimpse of sparkling gold, of brilliant

rose and ivory—her hair, the curve of her cheek and her slim, bare arm. She was a little thing, but she looked all strength and will and coolness; one could not be in her presence for five minutes without feeling her imperious charm. Wandesford halted on the threshold. He had felt a trifle ashamed of his cigars, but as soon as he met the air of the drawing-room he discovered that no apologies were necessary.

"Didn't know you smoked, Daisy," he said, coming forward.

"Didn't you?"

Wandesford perceived at once that she knew he did not like it. "It's plain you meant to keep it dark before," he said, infusing a gentle banter into his tone to soften the air.

"Oh, dear, no. I only smoke when I'm worried or—ill at ease," she responded. Her voice was very clear, staccato, apt for expressing irony. Wandesford had always admired its perfect intonation. And how amazingly pretty she was, in her Dresden-china colors of rose and gold and ivory! Yet her beauty was a little hard, like her voice.

"You've been quite a long time downstairs," she said. "How many cigars did you smoke?"

"Two. Did you miss me?"

"Oh, no. I smoked two cigarettes, myself."

"A pity we didn't smoke together."

"Do you really think so?"

Wandesford bent over her with obvious intentions. She presented her lips. Her hand went up a moment later, but not in time to hide her laughter. Wandesford was not a sweet-tempered

man, but he controlled himself and asked pleasantly: "What are you laughing at?"

"Oh, nothing in you, my dear boy! You do it beautifully. No doubt you have had plenty of practice."

Wandesford leaned against the mantelpiece, very big and powerful, with his black brows slightly drawn together. Meeting her provoking eyes, he unbent a little.

"Come, Daisy," he said, "don't talk rot of that sort. It isn't your style. What are you so thorny for? Why can't you be reasonable?"

"Reasonable! I *am* being reasonable, for the first time in three months."

"Since you became engaged to me, in fact."

"Yes. You were downstairs such a long time that I've had a chance of thinking things over. I haven't thought much lately, except about my trousseau, mixed with speculations, mostly on mother's part, I will admit, as to how long your brother Darenth will live to keep you out of the title."

"Yes? And what was the sum of your reflections, may I ask?"

She lay back with hands lightly folded in her lap; her blue-green eyes were composedly fixed upon his face.

"I have been wondering," she said, "why in the name of all that's marvelous, I allowed mother to bully me into marrying you."

Wandesford opened his lips and shut them again. He was always deliberate, and his delay added weight to the words when they came. "Well, I've been reflecting, too," he said. "And, since truth seems to be going just now, I may tell you that I've been wondering why on earth I allowed your mother to hook me for a son-in-law."

Daisy had not expected this. Accustomed to take her own way always, she had not expected to find the sword turned against herself. She sat up, her color burning geranium red. What a hard brute he looked, leaning so quietly there! Ruthless, unchivalrous, unscrupulously strong. He was a great motorist, and had the hard, keen face of the typical driver. Daisy was not

afraid; in truth, she had never been afraid of anything in the course of her twenty-four years, but he took her breath away. It was his deliberation which she could not pardon.

"Well, we don't seem to be suited to one another, do we?" she said.

"Perhaps not exactly."

"We can discuss our future arrangements tomorrow, I think." She rose and held out her hand. It was a clear dismissal. Wandesford retained her fingers for a moment. "I've been too outspoken, I suppose," he said. "But you would have it, you know."

"Oh, by all means! You said no more than I did myself," retorted Daisy. "No doubt, for once in our lives, we both spoke the truth."

When her husband had left her, Daisy propped her cheek again and stared into the fire. What the future was to bring she had not the least idea, but she saw that her affairs were in a pretty tangle.

It was a bitter cold night, full moon, bare heavens and a northeast gale. The house which they had chosen stood on the south slope of the Downs, overlooking the wide blue vale of Kent. Fashion just then decreed that honeymoons should be romantically lonely, and certainly Darenth Place was isolated enough for a Carthusian monastery. The wind rumbled in the chimney, beating back flames and smoke into the room. The heavy carpet heaved and swelled like waves. Daisy, with her bare arms and throat, walked across to the tall windows and threw them wide, her splendid young health defying the chill of the storm. A terrace outside formed a ledge on the precipitous slope of the hill. Daisy crossed the pavement and leaned over the balustrade, looking across miles of lavender-tinted, moonlight-blanchéd meadows and fields and trees. Far, far away she heard a train whistle, and give a few preliminary puffs before starting; then came its low continuous murmur, and after a while she could see the milky glare of smoke drifting back from the crawling engine. The sky was hard as bronze. The nar-

row jetty shade of an oak tree wavered on the pale stones at her feet. Her hair blew loose, and her comb dropped, tinkling. Daisy picked it up and went slowly back, though the room and its lights were still intolerable. She had been absent for perhaps ten minutes, and the windows had been open all the time.

As she stepped across the sill she heard a stir. Something was moving on the sofa. Daisy snatched the shade off the lamp, and in the sudden glare she saw a woman.

She was dressed in black, but in rags. Even to Daisy's inexperienced eyes she looked shockingly ill, and even more striking was her abject terror as she started up. "I didn't know there was anybody here—I didn't, indeed!" she cried breathlessly. "Where's Sydney? Isn't he here? I thought he would be here—"

"Lord Sydney Wandesford," said Daisy, "is in the smoking room, I believe." Her voice was as cold as the wind.

"Who are you?"

"I am Lady Sydney Wandesford."

"His wife? I didn't know he was married. I am very sorry. I wouldn't have come—only I thought he was here alone, as he used to be. I'll go at once."

The wretched creature gathered up her ragged cloak and made a step toward the window, cringing away from Daisy, who was a silent figure of scorn. But she had reached the end of her strength. She clutched at the little table and went down with a crash, in company with Daisy's cigarettes and a vase of arum lilies; their purity looked incongruous enough, lying on her dingy skirt. Daisy, in a sudden warmth of pity, ran to help her. But the outcast could not rise; she was fighting for breath, gasping and choking. She had broken a blood vessel.

"Hello! What's the row here?"

Wandesford, attracted by the crash of the table, was standing in the door. Daisy's patient started up on her elbow; she tried to call him by name and fainted away.

Wandesford came forward, his face changed and sobered. "Good God!" he said. "It's Julia!"

"Help me to lift her," said Daisy imperiously.

Their hands met, but not their eyes. Wandesford put aside his wife gently but decidedly, and carried the woman to the sofa. He laid her flat on her back, taking away the cushions. Looking round, he found Daisy at his elbow.

"You'd better clear out," he said kindly. "This isn't in your line, my dear. I'll get in one of the maids to help me. Someone must go for the doctor."

"One of the maids! What use would she be? She'll faint at the sight of blood. Tell me what to do and I'll do it—that is, if you know yourself; I don't."

"Oh, I know all right! I've seen my mother like this time and again. But you can't stay here, Daisy. One of the maids will do perfectly well; it's not work for you."

"What work there is may as well be done properly."

"I mean she isn't fit for you to touch," said Wandesford bluntly.

"I'm your wife. If she's fit for you, she's fit for me."

"You really mean it?"

"I do."

"I shall have to leave you alone while I go for the doctor. Are you game for that?"

"Yes."

"All right. Good for you! I'll be as quick as I can, but I must go myself and bring him back in the car. She needs ice."

"Give me my directions," said Daisy.

The pity which had moved her before kept her fast by the sofa; she could not give up her place to another. Her heart told her that it was her work. After speaking to the maids Wandesford came back to say good-bye.

"I've told them to get a room ready and light a fire. She'd better stay here till the doctor comes; it's quite warm, and I can't spare time to carry her up and settle her in before I go. Sure you don't mind doing this,

Daisy?" he added, laying his hand upon her shoulder. "The cook seems intelligent; I think she could manage all right, if you'd rather not."

But Daisy shook her head.

"Of course, I'd prefer to leave her with you," Wandesford said. He bent over the unconscious woman and kissed her. As he raised himself, he met Daisy's eye and colored, but he offered no excuse. A moment later the front door closed behind him, and she heard the throb of the departing car.

For the first hour that Daisy kept her vigil the sole event was the intrusion of the cook, zealous to help and sympathize. Daisy dismissed her without mercy. During the second hour she was listening every minute for the return of the car, but the night silence remained unbroken. Daisy found herself longing for her husband. In those dark hours she thought of her marriage—deeply, seriously. She had had dozens of lovers, but had chosen Wandesford—why? Mainly because no other woman had been able to succeed in doing so. Her mother's wishes and persuasions had not in truth counted for much. Daisy had not been brought up in cloistral ignorance, and the appearance of Julia was no shock to her faith in human nature. On the contrary, she had a rather lurid view of mankind, which would have made Wandesford himself smile—it was so youthful. Julia, however, set up a barrier between Daisy and her husband. She could not let him treat her as his wife, but at the same time she felt that the man who could show toward this miserable creature under her hands such tenderness and pity as she had read in Wandesford's face could not be beyond friendship. He had at some time loved this Julia well, and the aftermath of his love was strong enough to touch Daisy as he never had touched her before. Till that night she had never seen the real man. Her thoughts grew softer. This discovery, which should have broken the heart of a bride, inclined Daisy to kindness.

During the third hour the sick woman opened her eyes—dark, hollow,

anxious; they searched the room, and fixed on Daisy's face, anxiously bent over her.

"Sydney?" she asked.

"He has gone for a doctor. He will be here directly."

"You—his wife?"

"Yes. Hush; don't talk."

The sick woman lay quiet, and Daisy hoped that she had no more to say; it was impossible to silence her, and yet to let her talk was most unwise. But she was merely hoarding her strength for another attempt. She moved her hand and touched Daisy's.

"You do—love him?" Daisy hesitated. The sick woman trembled; she was anxious, appealing. "You don't mind about me? It was all—my fault. He was so good to me."

"No, I don't mind," said Daisy quickly.

Julia sank back with a sigh of contentment. Daisy took her hand to replace it under the coverlet, and the feeble fingers closed round hers and would not let her go. A thrill went over Daisy, such as a mother feels when her baby's hands cling to her for the first time. As she leaned forward to arrange the cushions, she met a strong whiff of spirits; but pity had her by the heart, and she felt no repulsion.

The clock struck loudly in the hall. Julia's eyes questioned her appealingly, trustingly. "He'll soon be back," said Daisy, soothing her. They were still hand in hand, but now, with the same dim maternal instinct working in her, Daisy slipped her arm under Julia's neck, and drew her head against her breast. The sick woman nestled down with a murmur of satisfied longing, and settled into rest. She seemed to draw in life from Daisy's young strength. The wrinkles in her face smoothed out. In a little while she was asleep in Daisy's arms. And, after a long time of waiting, Daisy slept, too.

"Take Lady Sydney away and rub her arms with witch-hazel, and if you haven't got that, try whisky," said

the doctor, who was a practical man and hated amateur nurses; he had brought a professional of his own. He bundled all outsiders out of the room; and Daisy, who was still half asleep, presently woke up to find herself sitting by the fire in the dining room, her hand clasped in her husband's, while he rubbed the white curve of her arm with a palmful of whisky. Her arms were aching, she discovered, and the friction was soothing. She looked at Wandesford with sleepy, friendly eyes. He was no more skillful than she had been at tending the sick, and spilled twice as much whisky on her dress as he rubbed on her arm.

"What on earth induced you to do it?" he grumbled half angrily. "It wasn't in the least necessary. It would have been far better for her to lie flat."

"She wanted me to."

"You should have let her want, then. Ten to one she wasn't even clean."

"You must be truly annoyed to say that," said Daisy. "Now, why should you be? Surely you would consider Julia rather than me."

"Yes, poor old Julia," said Wandesford with the sudden softened tone that Daisy liked. "Tucker says it's only a matter of weeks. You won't mind if I have her at Darenth? She's pretty disreputable, I admit, but I'm not going to turn out my only sister to die in the gutter."

For the space of a couple of minutes Daisy did not speak. She reflected on the results of being too clever. Then she said: "I never knew till today,

you know, that you had a sister. How did she manage to get into this state?"

"There's pretty wild blood in all of us," said Wandesford. "You know, they say that one in every generation of the Wandesfords goes through the divorce court. Poor old Julia was ours. She was the eldest of the lot of us, and was very decent to me when I was a kid. The man didn't marry her after the smash. I'd have thrashed him into it, but he died. After that poor old Julia went utterly to the bad. I tried to get her back, but she wouldn't let us find her. She wrote to me that she would only come home to die. Is your arm any better?"

Daisy nodded. "What are we going to do ourselves, Sydney?" she asked, detaining his fingers.

"Make the best of things, I suppose."

"I won't live with you and quarrel perpetually," said Daisy slowly. "Yet we're both irreconcilably fond of our own way. It seems to me it's one of two things. Either we separate at once—which doesn't seem to answer with you Wandesfords, or else—"

"Well?"

"You know what I mean."

"Put it into words."

"Or else we've got to love each other pretty thoroughly. For you don't go in for half-measures, Sydney, nor do I."

"The question is, can we do it?" asked Wandesford after a pause.

"Can you?" asked Daisy, turning her fearless eyes full on his face.

"Yes, after seeing you with Julia."

"So can I."



WHEN you make a cloak of your religion, it is hard for you to see when it has grown threadbare.



A CO-RESPONDENT is known by the company he keeps.

THE THREE SERVANTS

By MARTHA HASKELL CLARK

A BEGGAR sat at the gate of life,
Where the hurrying world passed by,
To test the worth of his life on earth
E'er ever he came to die.

He spake to his Will. "I have nourished thee
In the world's hard serfdom where Might is king.
Naught man could do have ye lacked from me;
And what reward do ye homeward bring?"

*And his Will, reluctant, flung him down
A scanty handful of copper brown.*

He turned to his Mind. "As ye well have known,
I have hoarded riches to give to thee.
I have spent my life at thy altar stone;
Now what returns will ye give to me?"

*And his Mind drew forth from its treasure chest
One purse of silver from all the rest.*

And last, to his Heart. "Unto thy call,
Small leisure have I had to give.
I drove ye forth from my banquet hall;
Take thy revenge while yet I live!"

*His Heart smiled grave. "I have stored for thee
The hidden wealth of thy dreams untold,
For once in the past you smiled at me."
And it poured at his feet a flood of gold!*



NO SUBJECT FOR EXPERIMENT

STUYVESANT—Like most men, I have my faults.

GLADYS—Perhaps; but they are so insignificant that no girl would feel justified in marrying you to reform you.

THE PERFECTION OF A SCOUNDREL

By FREDERIC IRVING

OVER a feverish brow John Chalmers ran a tired hand. He was weary with forty-eight hours of toil, broken only by a nap snatched now and then from the very teeth of circumstances; and there was no consolation in the prospect.

The Claraday River was roaring here as if to make up for the vast stretch of placidity above and below. Like a very human thing, it had run a great way, only to throw itself into the torturing convulsions which mark its course above Mannington. Chalmers did not regret this period of struggle in the stream's life story. Indeed, he saw that one's terrific struggle is another's opportunity; he it was who had said to the men of Mannington that the Claraday rapids were rich with latent wealth, and he had proved it. Yes, almost. He had conceived the idea of the Mannington Power Corporation; he had seen it financed, with his rich, close-fisted father-in-law, Courtlandt Van Tyne, as the chief stockholder. He had designed the great canals, power pits and dam, and even the long flood tunnel, which was in the day of overflow to protect Cottondale, old Courtlandt Van Tyne's factory suburb. Now, in this very moment of stress, he knew his plan was good. Even the tremendous flood which had suddenly turned the placid stretches of Claraday into boiling eddies had only proved the completeness of his plans.

A boy rushed up with a message—rushed, indeed, for the writhing agony

of the Claraday was stirring the blood of all who beheld. Nervously John Chalmers tore open the message. Tall, studious and masterful of mien, he was at this moment his normal self in all but calmness.

"Hold the Power officers personally responsible!" he angrily quoted. "Better hold himself responsible! Didn't I tell that board of directors that the flood tunnel must be built the very first thing? Didn't I try to resign when the greedy devils forced this crime on me? Didn't I tell Van Tyne that profit-taking was childish then? He knew, damn him, that he was letting down the bars to that scoundrel of a Chord!"

Angry words, spoken no doubt to the open sky, but unheard for the tooting of dummy engines, the shrieking of windlasses, that very Vulcan's forge of a spot below the great dam. It was a race for life—for a thousand lives, and John Chalmers, worn though he was, knew that he was coaching the team that ought to win, the team that *must* win! He was leading that fight for the homes of the poor in Cottondale, yes, even for the lives of the little children! That overflow tunnel *must* be finished before the flood reached the loose top of the big dam!

His fists clenched and thrust deep in his pockets, the right still convulsively crumpling his father-in-law's terrified appeal, he paced on that bank and declaimed till the messenger brought him to himself.

"Any answer?"

"Of course. Give me your book!" Then he scrawled:

When you sold me out to my enemy and yours, to Jennison Chord, whom you knew to be an infernal scoundrel, you released me from the last vestige of responsibility. You put this man where he could hamper me because he hates me—and you know his reason, his oft-repulsed ambition. It is no secret from either of us. You "cleaned up" twice the value of your old mills; if you lose them, I don't care a damn. But the poor women and babies over whose heads Chord strikes at you and at me—I would die first, if dying would save them.

The messenger knew not what was written, yet he was not such a child as to overlook the hard-written, fierce resolve on the big engineer's face.

In a moment John Chalmers was again at his task. Here, there and everywhere he lent energy to the fight against the flood. He encouraged the men in both ends of the tunnel, for from the shaft near the dam and up from below the rapids he had every man who could be used hammering away through the solid rock. He increased the efforts to solidify the dam. He told them all that they would win; yet, in his heart, as he estimated the rise of the water against the full volume the power canals could carry away, he knew to a certainty that, unless the upper shift could be kept working till it met the lower shift in the bowels of the earth, there was absolutely no hope of success. Before the drillers working toward the dam could alone complete the flood tunnel, the dam would certainly go down, sweeping away both power and the hope of retreat.

With all the pumps at his command he fought against the seepage which was surely gaining on the workmen in the upper end of the tunnel. It was not enough. Deliberately he planned the last step—a separate line of air for breathing, a temporary valve or caisson to close off the seep water; these in, and he would go down with the men of the upper shift, to stay till they met those who worked toward them, and come out from the lower terminal of the tunnel. A long chance, but the last one! Once through, the opening

of the valve at the dam would clean out the rubbish, the caisson, the machines and all, under the terrific pressure of miles of flood.

The work of preparation for this entombment was done. He was calling for volunteers from the drillmen.

"Single men only. Don't leave your wives and the kids! I'm going in with you, but if the flood stops the air pumps we shall never get out; but it's the only chance for the little homes in Cottondale!"

Someone grumbled. "He wants to save the old man's mill."

He guessed what he did not hear. "Not at the risk of my life, man!" The quota was filled. They must hurry, or it would be too late, for a hundred and forty feet below they could see the seepage rising at the bottom of the horizontal shaft; it would be still deeper at the drills.

Again the messenger came just as the car was starting down. The General Manager read what was handed him, and then he swore, as few of his men had heard him, or any other, swear.

"Call every man who can leave his post!" he shouted.

"Boys, we are fighting together, and it's the fight of our lives," he began.

"Hurrah for the boss!" came the answer firmly.

"I am going down with these boys, never to come out of this end of the tunnel alive! If we get air to breathe and air to run the drills, we will come out below, as sure as there is a God in Heaven!"

"Three cheers for—"

"No!" He had stopped the cheering—it took up time. "If you leave your posts we die like rats in a trap! But listen to this!" He held up the message; they knew it was anger that caused the tremor of his hand.

"At today's meeting of the Board of Directors, which you disregarded, you were removed. With this notice, your services as Manager and Engineer will terminate, and you will leave the Company's property forthwith. To patch up your mistakes I have taken the presidency, and a new engineer will be on in the morning to take charge of the wreck your incompetence is leaving to us."

The man paused. It was a bitter dose, the reading to his own subordinates of the charges which he now saw had been so long in the making; at a glance he saw that Chord had long laid his plans for this very moment of his own undoing. He continued grimly:

"It is wasting money to fool longer with that flood tunnel. When you have notified the men to fly for their lives, your services to the Company are closed.

"(Signed)

"JENNISON CHORD."

"Boys," he went on, "some of you have for months known the facts about the building of the spillway. As for the meeting, where was my place while you were here sweating blood? Boys, these are the words of my enemy! I am going into the shaft. Will the pumps run?"

Above the scream and rattle of industry, even above the grumble of the Claraday, came the shout of determined artisans who felt for their fellows in distress; the question was answered.

Once more a delay, for the regular telegraph messenger was handing Chalmers a white envelope. As he hastily scrawled an answer they thought they noticed pallor on his face; but whatever it was, he stepped into the car and they lowered away.

That much the workmen could see. The ill-worded message of the Scandinavian domestic they could not see, but into John Chalmers's memory it had burnt its place:

It is your wife's honor which now home at once begs you to come.

LINDA.

On the most exclusive street of Man-nington stood the house of John Chalmers. Its ample proportions, its stately lines seemed to cry out: "We go to make the home of a man of the world, yet an independent person who pays his way." Devoid of those ostentations which mark inherited wealth, it was yet prosperous; and while no retinue of servants bustled about, the untiring zeal of Linda Barth was a substitute. The doorknob shone; the windows always glistened.

In almost the same moment that the head of that household had been lowered into the incomplete tunnel, to be closed behind the valve over which the seep water would soon rise, strong-armed Linda had answered the door for a messenger; and her heart fell within her when she saw that he who rang was not the master of the house.

For things had now come to such a pass as to arouse even the stolid Linda. That Jennison Chord was her master's enemy she well knew; in fact, all Man-nington, save Mrs. Jennison Chord, knew that long before Cornelia Van Tyne's marriage, he had coveted those languorous eyes. Linda did not see any incongruity in Chord's conducting a campaign against Chalmers from his own house; but the messengers who for the better part of three days had been running to and fro about that house were making strange remarks; and so far as she was possessed of such moods as ruled her mistress, she knew the present mental state of Mrs. Chalmers. Had she not served Cornelia Chalmers when she boasted that her husband was "not content to be the son-in-law of my father," with wise glances at neighboring houses? And had she not seen Cornelia begin to rage against her husband's devotion to business, till now it was a passion with her? Of course, Linda did not know what it was to be lonely, and she could not understand a yearning for a strong arm to lean upon passively for a half-hour at a time; if Linda had found such at her disposal she would have given it different labor! But she knew that as the Power Corporation's work had progressed she had seen less and less of Chalmers and increasingly more of Chord; and now Mrs. Chalmers had taken up the plaintive whine of old Van Tyne—she was saying that her husband was a dreamer, a failure, a bungler.

As she took Chord's message to him she saw what satisfied her that in telegraphing she had not dared too much—the master ought to know. And what a beast he was, to be dawdling around that silly thing, her mistress,

while a man, John Chalmers, was at real work!

The bell rang again; the message was Linda's own, and she read it with a sinking heart.

Within John Chalmers's own study his enemy gloated over victory—long sought, and therefore joyous victory. He, Jennison Chord, had won! What mattered it that his patrician wife was at that moment undoubtedly driving about in her town car, leaving pretty slips of board with his name and hers—that his son was already old enough to follow the paternal example in philandering? He had won! How he had hated Courtlandt Van Tyne because a dozen years back that man had foiled his desire to uncertain friendship with Van Tyne's own daughter! Even here he would win, for any moment he expected to hear that Cottondale was swept away as he, Jennison Chord, had planned. Of course it cost something. What cared he for cost? The franchise he had bought right under Chalmers's eyes from Van Tyne himself he knew to be worth more, even with the dam swept away, than he had paid; his vengeance was free! Besides, to win Cornelia he must needs humble Chalmers; was she not at this very moment at his feet?

He had waited long enough for Linda to bring that message. He arose nervously, his broad shoulders suggesting power to punish the delay, his straight, hard-lined mouth and thin, angular, high-bridged nose showing his remorseless willfulness.

"Ring for that maid!" he said, rebuke in his voice. Mrs. Chalmers, rejoicing in the overmastery which alone would have made her a devoted wife, obeyed meekly. Linda entered, John Chalmers's telegram in her hand.

"You opened my message." His words had the crack of a rifle, sharp, penetrating, terrifying. Yet to stolid Linda no words could be terrifying. At most, they could only awaken; and she reacted as never before or since.

"You lie, man! It is what is mine!"

He, too, was shocked to sudden action; he seized the message and read

it aloud before Linda knew he had moved.

"What is the woman I love compared to this work? It shall be done!"

"Leave!" Chord felt himself vindicated. Standing there, straight and imposing as vivified granite, he scowled reprovingly at the retreating Swede; then he threw the message at the feet of the woman who was left.

"Your pardon, that I should order away your rival, Cornelia. If this shows Chalmers's taste, what were his motives in marrying you?"

The woman had thrown herself, weeping, upon the couch.

"I would to God that you were right! If John Chalmers had an ounce of humanity about him, even as you see this, I could love him! I would to God he had made me jealous! But he never did! Instead, he wore me out with eternal sermonizing on duty, duty, duty—on obligations to one's 'fellows,' the people one has never seen—and never a particle, in all this drowning flood of philosophy, about the little something of joy one owes to one's own self! If you were only right I could view the future with a little hope, for who would fear the rivalry you suggest?" A hysterical smile came and went. "Oh, would that you were right!"

Cornelia Chalmers had truly comprehended the situation. At a glance she read the signs of Linda's revolt. The dull and voiceless servant had at last seen; and when she had seen, she had lost no time in putting before John Chalmers the choice between his work and his wife. God help her, he had deliberately spurned her—he had chosen the work! Now, for the first conscious moment, was the hour of her own revolt!

The grace, the reserve, the dignity, which through all these months of scheming and hunting had drawn Jennison Chord toward the wife of his enemy, were thrown aside; impetuously, she cast herself at his head! But in that moment she had become to him another woman, and he would have none of her! Her hysterical words had

brought him an idea. Was his an empty conquest? He turned and seized the telephone with a speed out of all harmony with his customary dignified repose.

"The dam—quick, Central, the dam! This is President Chord. Where is Chalmers? . . . A dead man, you say?"

"You don't know?" came the incredulous answer. "Why, he's bottled up in the flood tunnel! Seep water filled the shaft back of him, and there's no escape unless they can cut a way out, as he planned. And they'll never do that! You knew the power line parted?"

"What do you mean?"

"See here! We've no time for fooling! If you are really Chord, you surely know that the power line is the pipe that carries the compressed air for the rock drills. The other line for air to breathe is still holding, but it will stop when the water goes over the dam, and then he's done for! He's as good as dead now. Is that all?"

But Chord was already yelling: "Ring off! Get off the line! 2-3-8-7! The garage—Chord's machine—any one—to Chalmers's house, quick!"

He turned fiercely to the woman.

"John Chalmers shall not play that trick!"

"He has outplayed you—how, Jennison?"

"In no way, yet. Not yet—and 'not yet' means 'never'!"

He pushed by the woman without a word of explanation and, like a wild man, rushed to the street, where his machine was already waiting; no servile delay ever invited his second displeasure.

Left to herself, there were some things for the woman to discover. Suddenly she realized that it was well into the night. She raised the window shade and peered into the darkness—all quiet, oppressive. Her hand went to her throat. She could not breathe. There was disaster in the air; and yet she felt as if it were passing away; turning back toward the telephone, her foot caught on a turned rug and she sprang, startled, from it. Somehow, some slimy,

fanged thing seemed hurrying away before her. Jennison Chord for the first time seemed to her mysterious and incomprehensible, even terrible. Was John, her John, the father of her child, triumphing over him? Guiltily she thought of what she had said of John Chalmers ever so few seconds before; but she must know. She took up the telephone.

And still she did not understand Chord's attitude, but she knew that she must go to the dam or go mad!

The roar of the Claraday was every moment increasing when Chord arrived. Flickering arc lights now broke the darkness. Weirdly the gleams fell on the stricken faces of men who pitied their trapped comrades, of women who wept piteously for fathers and sweethearts who would find tombs in the rock at the bottom of Claraday River.

Chord grasped the situation. The air pipes had pulled apart of their own weight. Firmly supported by great wire cables anchored in solid rock, new ones were ready, but they could not be joined, for the top strata at the head of the shaft had started to slide. At any moment a great weight of stone and earth might fill the shaft—then a day's work more, and not that much time left! There was no use in killing more men in the hope of rescuing those already lost.

"A thousand dollars to the man who will join the lines!"

No answer. The workmen knew, if Jennison Chord did not, that such a thing spelled death.

"Two thousand!"

Still no answer beyond the sobs of weeping women, and they unheard by Jennison Chord!

"Then, who goes down with me? My luck never fails!"

That was different. An old steam-fitter stepped forth. Solemnly he bade his comrades good-bye; he, at least, knew what he was doing.

"You are prepared for the worst, Mr. Chord?" he warned.

"No, I'm not. We'll come out all

right." Then he stopped. "Perhaps there is a chance for bad luck." He took a paper from his pocket and wrote. "Here," he said quietly to a man he recognized. "If I never come out give this to Chalmers; otherwise burn it unread, do you hear?"

How long the moments till the final signal came: "Hoist away!" The joints were made—and they held! Down in the earth the drills were running again! It seemed uncanny. This man, ignorant of labor, had faced what they who loved John Chalmers dared not, and in a moment more he would be safe. His deed was insanity, and it was protected by Providence, or by some devil!

Then the inevitable came. Heavy machinery of the hoist, the slanting stone at one side of the shaft's mouth, all fell in with a crash. Thank heaven, the air still held, and if there was yet time before the water got into the power house, Chalmers was safe.

And now all hands bent to the rescue of Jennison Chord, if he still lived.

But for the clouds which overcast the valley and intermittently augmented the flood, it would have been dawn when a crowd of maniacs rushed up the rugged path from below the rapids, bound for the valve house in the dam. It was John Chalmers and the two forces of drillmen! They had won! Somehow, they stopped him in time. The margin was close, but since Chord had saved his life, he must risk it. In good time they found both the bodies, and with the bucket halfway up the shaft, Chalmers signaled the valve house. Then from the bottom of the dam the weight of countless tons of water caught what was left of the slide, the temporary valve, the drills and all, and swept them off as if they had been sawdust. Down the valley, seventy feet below Cottondale, came a new roar of the floods. It was the water at the tunnel's end, and it was a benediction upon Cottondale.

They brought up Jennison Chord and his companion, both killed by the slide. Solemnly all uncovered, and John Chalmers lifted his voice.

"Men, I have done Jennison Chord an injustice. He saved our lives at the price of his own. He must have known his danger. For this thing we must ever hold him in grateful memory."

They carried the bodies to shelter.

Somehow, Chalmers had known that his wife was there in the crowd of women who stood by, but the work had to come first. Now he swiftly pushed his way to her. He took her in his strong arms, but neither spoke.

After him pushed the man whom Jennison Chord had known.

"Mr. Chord left a message for you before he went into the shaft."

"Left me a message!" echoed Chalmers drowsily. "Thank you," he added, and waited till the man moved on.

He stood silent a moment, while the little anger and jealousy of his nature and his curiosity to know what would do him no good fought with the homely good sense which was the soul of Chalmers. Still gazing at his wife without so much as a glance at the note, he said: "Read it, Cornelia. I imagine it has to do with the change of a viper into a song bird, if such ever happens."

Silently she read:

I shall get out of this all right; but if I do not, save the mock heroics. You neatly planned to hang your cast-off wife a millstone about my neck, when you went into that hole to die. You shall not succeed, damn you!

"It is to you, John," she whispered, pale even in the dark. "Read it."

He did not obey. Instead, he tore it to fragments. "Most men die as they live. This man seems an exception; and if he is not, I prefer never to know it. Let us go home, Cornelia. The work is done, and it is right."

Suddenly she saw that she had in all the years understood him even less than she had comprehended Chord. A great happiness was hers. "Thank God for your happy return!" she murmured. She knew that she was fainting, and that he had her in his arms, but she was happy.

"Thus endeth the first lesson," she added wandringly.

SPRING ON BROADWAY

By LOUIS UNTERMEYER

MAKE way for Spring—
Spring that's a stranger in the city,
Spring that's a truant in the town!
Make way for Spring, for she has no pity,
And she will tear your barriers down—
Make way for Spring!

See, from her hidden valleys,
With joy that never palls,
She comes with songs and sallies,
With mirth and magic calls,
And dances down your alleys
And whispers thro' your walls.

You, who never once have missed her
In your town of pomp and pride,
Now in vain you will resist her—
You will feel her at your side.
Even in the densest throng
She will walk with you along;
She will stop you as you start
Here and there, and growing bolder,
She will pluck you by the shoulder,
She will catch you at the heart.

Maiden with the nunlike eyes,
Do not pause to greet her.
Spring is far too wild and wise;
Do not meet her.
Do not listen while she tells
All her winsome lures and spells;
Do not learn her secrets, lest
She should plant them in your breast,
Whisper things to shame and shock you,
Make your heart beat fast—and mock you,
Send you dreams that rob your rest.
Maiden with the nunlike eyes,
Spring is far too wild and wise.

And you, my friend with hasty stride,
Think you to escape her?
Ah! like fire touching paper,
She will burn into your side.

THE SMART SET

She will rouse you once again,
 She will sway you till you follow
 Like the smallest singing swallow
 In her train.

So—and that is right, my friend,
 Do not yield;
 Send her on her way, and end
 All her follies; let her spend
 Her useless days and nights concealed
 In wood and field.
 The paths beyond the town are clear
 As skies at dawn;
 Bid her begone—
 What is she doing here?

What is she doing here—and why?
 The city is no place for Spring.
 What can she have—what can she bring
 That you would care to buy?
 Her songs? Alas! you do not sing.
 Her smiles? But you would rather sigh.
 Her wings? You do not care to fly.
 Spring has not fashioned anything
 To tempt your jaded eye.

The city is no place for her;
 It is too violent and shrill,
 It is too full of care—but still
 Beneath the restless surge and stir
 Her spirit lives and moves until
 Even the dullest feel the spur
 Of an awakened will.

Make way for Spring—make way then;
 Join in the lyric rout
 Till earth is free; and may then
 The very stones sing out,
 Till nowhere is a single
 Sleeping or silent thing,
 And worlds that meet and mingle
 Fairly tingle with the Spring.

Make way for Her—
 For the fervor of Life,
 For the visions that stir,
 For the sweetness of Strife,
 For the struggles that bring
 God nearer each day—
 Make way for the Spring,
 Make way!

TABLOID FICTION

By JAMES L. FORD

Motoring Romance No. 573 of this year's crop, and of near kinship to the Nature Fake. A Baedeker's Guide must yield up its life whenever one of these Romances of Travel is born. No regular patron of trolley car or omnibus should be without a specimen of this school of literature.

CHAPTER I.—TOLD BY THE AMATEUR CHAUFFEUR

WHEN the old lady presented herself and offered to engage my motor car, with myself as chauffeur, for fifteen guineas a day, I came very near telling her—but just then I caught a glimpse of a pair of blue eyes, some waxy golden hair and a rosy mouth, whereupon I, the Marquis of Connaught, instantly agreed to act as guide and chauffeur to "Mommer," her young daughter, "Sis," and Maida Vale, the lovely niece of the elder lady and the owner of the afore-said eyes, hair and mouth.

To them I was merely Mr. Connaught, an impecunious young Irishman. I said nothing about my title, fearing that it might give offense to the loyal Americans who usually carry their hatred of coronets so far that I was quite surprised to find that Mommer had an admirer in the person of one Baron Seersucker. This nobleman was quite indignant at the thought of the entire family embarking under my guidance. I know he prevented Mommer from sitting beside me in the front seat, but I forgave him when Miss Vale took the place, leaving Sis to go with her mother in the tonneau. Just as we were starting, the Baron suddenly appeared, clothed in a long linen duster and bearing in his hand a huge pair of goggles.

"Wait!" he cried. "My car will soon be here."

"Oh, do let us wait for the poor Baron!" cried Mommer. But Maida gave me a look of such significance that I signaled the head waiter, to whom I had just given a generous tip, to draw in the gangplank, and a moment later we were off amid the acclamations of all the guests and hotel servants who had assembled to see us start. Glancing back, I beheld the Baron in swift pursuit, his goggles on his nose and the tails of his duster flapping in the breeze.

"Do you think he will be able to catch us?" inquired Maida.

"Never!" I replied. "His duster does not carry enough sail."

"I do hope," said Maida, looking up in my face with a trusting smile, "that you will not fail to point out whatever objects of interest lie on our route."

"Certainly," I answered. "That is one of the most agreeable of my duties. That house which we are just passing is the birthplace of the great Correggio, who, with subsequent Venetian masters, was frequently taken as a model by the Italian painters of the seventeenth century; and the influence they exercised could not fail to be detected even by the amateur, if the entire post-Raphaelite period were not usually overlooked. Those, however, who make the great cinquecentists their principal study will doubtless be loath to examine the works of their successors."

"That is really very interesting," said Miss Vale, as I finished my discourse. "How wonderful it must be to know as much as you do!"

"If we pass any of the houses of these Renaissance painters I wish you would stop and let me have a look," said Mommer, nudging me in the back with her parasol. "Our culture class had just loped up even with that bunch when I came away, and I would like to give them something of a surprise when I get home. So do tell me all about them."

"With great pleasure," I replied. "One of the most talked of in that whole Renaissance bunch—a man whose name is known to every art class in the Western Hemisphere—once lived in that house at the foot of the hill. His name was Titian. The painting of portraits and of a somewhat limited cycle of mythological subjects engrossed the greater part of his time and talents. That Titian's genius, however, was by no means alien to religion and deep feeling in art, and that his imagination was as rich and powerful in this field as in portraying realistic and sensual forms of existence, is proved by his numerous ecclesiastical paintings, of which the finest are the 'Persaro Madonna,' 'The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence' and 'The Presentation in the Temple.'"

"My, but you're the wise guy to remember all that!" exclaimed Sis, who had been listening unobserved. "I'd like to know what encyclopedia you got that out of," she added musingly.

These American children are hideously sharp and precocious, and I heartily wish that this one had been left at home. She makes me a little uneasy.

By this time it was growing dark, and as our route lay through a deep and narrow mountainous pass, I was obliged to devote all my attention to the management of the car, which had been acting very unreasonably ever since sunset. Suddenly she stopped, reared herself on her hind wheels and emitted a prolonged cry like that of a wild beast in pain, causing Sis to spring to the ground and her mother to utter a yell that made me forget the heartrending cry of the motor car. As for Miss Vale, she threw her arms about my neck and clung there so tightly that

I could do nothing but wait for the enraged machine to subside.

CHAPTER II.—TOLD BY MAIDA VALE

JUST as I had made up my mind that we were all going to die in that lonely mountain pass, far, far from home—I determined if I passed away it would be with my head resting on Mr. Connaught's dear shoulder—we were aroused by the barking of a dog, and in another moment a huge, shaggy beast came leaping toward us. From his neck depended a small box of tools, which Mr. Connaught eagerly seized, crying: "We are near the St. Bernard monastery, where the pious monks dwell. Their dogs now carry great flasks of gasoline and complete sets of tools, instead of the bottles of wine and loaves of bread of an elder day."

Really, that man is a perfect encyclopedia! Just fancy his being able to tell us all about the St. Bernard monastery before we got there!

The intelligent dog now examined the interior of the car, and by pointing with his tail showed us what was wrong and how to repair it with the tools he had brought with him. This done, the excellent animal led the way to the monastery, where we passed the night. Early the next morning we were on our way, and by ten found ourselves in a beautiful village, shaded by fine olive and chestnut trees.

"Do you know anything interesting about this place?" I inquired, more in fun than in earnest, for I little thought that Mr. Connaught's knowledge, wide and deep as it is, would embrace the legendry of such small hamlets. Judge, then, of my surprise when he made answer with his usual fluency:

"This is the Village of Sardellen, founded by the Etruscans in B.C. 112 and named Felsina, but afterwards conquered by the Gallic Boii, and by them called Bononio. In the Punic war it espoused the cause of Hannibal, after which, in B.C. 189, it was converted into a Roman colony. Its natives are of a light purple hue, and its

principal exports are cotton, rye, barley, indigo and a great variety of luscious fruits."

Ah, what a happy chance it was to place me on the front seat beside our learned guide! And to think that it should be I, the humble American heiress, who should profit most by the wealth of his research and learning! He little dreams, however, that it is I who am rich in my own right. If he were to find that out he would despise and shun me like the peerless Briton that he is.

We had just passed through Sardinia when the motor car came to a sudden stop. Mr. Connaught alighted, and in a few moments reported that the cantilever was out of gear and the carbon burnt out. It would take fully an hour to repair it, he said, and while Sis was asking him if he couldn't transfer us to the car ahead, as they do in New York, whether you wish to or not, I heard a familiar chuckle behind me, and there stood Baron Seersucker with a grin of malignant triumph on his face. He held his goggles in his hand, and the tails of his bedraggled and grimy duster flapped idly about his legs. He had run after us all the way, and, despite our best efforts, had overtaken us.

"Your car seems to be in trouble," he observed, with a sneer that he did not even try to conceal. "If the ladies would only enter my car—"

"Your car!" retorted Mr. Connaught. "I don't see it anywhere about here!"

"I don't believe you've got any car!" screamed Sis from the tonneau, and if auntie hadn't boxed her ears there's no knowing what more she might have said. As it was, the Baron turned on his heel and walked away, with a look of mingled rage, love, hate and jealousy on his face that was equal to a whole quarter's lessons in a dramatic academy.

Meanwhile we waited while the cantilever was repaired at a roadside blacksmith shop, and as we watched the glowing sparks, Mr. Connaught pointed out a distant village on the plains and asked me if I knew why it

was famous the wide world through. Of course I had to confess that I did not know, and then he once more threw open the treasure house of his mind and explained that it was in that house that a man named Christopher Columbus once lived while pursuing his studies of astronomy. Then he went on in his wonderfully simple and direct way to describe how in 1492 this intrepid man sailed across the ocean and discovered the Western Hemisphere, and how a few years later Pocahontas, the Indian maiden, saved the life of Captain John Smith, and how Jamestown was settled by the British, and how a great many other wonderful things happened. His talk was so fascinating and displayed such a depth of research and such wealth of imagery that I started with surprise when the blacksmith took the cantilever from the anvil and I realized that I had been listening for one whole, solid hour.

"Some other time," said Mr. Connaught, as we whirled away, "I will relate to you a most interesting anecdote of Columbus and an egg that he caused to stand upright on the table. I came across it while taking a special course in European history at Oxford."

CHAPTER III.—TOLD BY SIS

I'm just beginning to get wise to this Mr. Connaught and the Baron. They're a pair of fakes. I noticed from the first that Connaught, or "our society chauffeur," as Mommer insists on calling him, was giving out a lot of hot air to Maida on the front seat. At first he had me conned, too, and I thought we were all up against the original Tree of Knowledge till I happened to—well, never mind. That will do to tell later.

As for the Baron, he never quite got by me with his talk about kings and ancestral estates and motor cars and all that. It sounded something like the real goods at first, but very soon I made up my mind to put the acid test on him, and the next time I caught him looking at Mommer with his soul

shining in his eyes, as they say in the novels, I just called out, "*Gargon, l'addition, s'il vous plait!*" and you ought to have seen him jump.

He tried to laugh it off when he saw how he had given himself away, but he must have known from that moment that I was wise to all his games. As it was, he gave me a look that made me begin to worry about poor Mommer. Not that it is any of my business whom or what she marries, but I think that I ought to have some say about the thing that's brought home to be my stepfather. Children have some rights in America, no matter what the laws are in Europe. So I just set my little thinking machine to work and kept my eyes peeled for fair.

Maybe you think it's an easy job for a little kid like me to do up a couple of bright ones like the Baron and Connaught, especially when your mother is stuck on one of them and your cousin on the other. Well, I hadn't been on the job long before I saw that I was up against it, and that if I didn't get away with the trick I would be in the hole myself and everybody stamping on the lid to keep it down.

First of all, I had to get the Baron headed away from Mommer, and that meant turning him toward Maida, as there were no other heiresses in sight. Then I had to put a crimp in Connaught's works and cut off the flow of hot air that was casting such a spell over my baby cousin. About this time I came across the source of all the wisdom that he had been pumping out, and it was nothing but a plain old red Baedeker's guidebook. I knew we were due to enter Tuscany the next day, so I cut out all the pages that told about that country, and then I got hold of the Baron and told him that Mommer couldn't touch anything but the income, but that Maida's money was in her own name and there was plenty of it. Then I asked Maida right out loud what sort of a place Florence was, and she looked to Connaught, and he reached for his book and somehow couldn't find the place and said it didn't matter, as it was off

our route. From that minute I kept asking a steady stream of questions right from the torn pages, and he couldn't say a word. That gave the Baron the chance he had been looking for, and he jumped right in and made good with a bright flood of guff about all those Dago artists that used to have their studios about here. He had Maida conned in less than a minute, and just as I was getting scared for fear he would get to be my stepcousin—I don't want any Dago near me at all—the car stopped right in the middle of the road and began to "act up," as Mommer said between screams, for she got scared to death the minute the thing got up on its hind wheels and tried to climb the side of a house. Maida threw her arms around Connaught, and I was so busy hanging on for dear life that I couldn't hear what she said to him. As for the Baron, he was thrown clean out of the car and lit on the back of his neck in the road. Then he made a break that killed him as dead as a door nail, as far as Maida is concerned.

He got up, all covered with dirt and madder than a wet hen, and ran around the car and gave it two swift kicks as hard as he could, and just laughed when the machine set up a screech and settled down trembling like a leaf. Well, you know what a softy Maida is about cruelty to inanimate objects! She shook her parasol at the Dago and said: "You kicked it! You know you did! Don't ever dare to speak to me again!"

"But, Miss Vale," said the Baron, taking off his hat and going down on his knees, "I assure you that I know all about motor cars and they cannot be trained entirely by kindness. It is sometimes necessary to be severe with them. I assure you that this one will be perfectly docile for the rest of the day." And, sure enough, the thing gave a snort and a leap, and before the Baron could get aboard we were off a half a mile up the road, with Maida clinging to Connaught's shoulder and begging for some more of his hot air, and he not able to say a word until

we got out of Tuscany, because I had all the torn pages in my muff.

Well, my heart began to soften when I saw we were going so fast that the Baron could never catch up with us, not even if he had two linen dusters square-rigged and four pairs of goggles into the bargain. So I just slipped the pages into Connaught's hand, and he gave me such a look of gratitude as I never saw on anybody's face before,

and the next thing I knew, he was whispering into Maida's ear that Pisa became a Roman colony in B.C. 180, and in the intestine wars of the Peninsula sustained a severe shock through the downfall of the Hens-taufen.

And while he talked Maida was looking up into his face in a way that showed plainly enough that he had her conned for keeps.



AS TO CERTAIN OF OUR FRIENDS

By J. K. LE BARON

HE rose from the ranks to a position from which he could not see those in the ranks from which he had risen.

SHE was so profligate with the time she gave to her neighbors' affairs that she had none left for her own.

HE took himself so seriously that his acquaintances mistook him for a joke.

SHE gave her life to society, but the sacrifice was never appreciated.

SHE never missed her church devotions when her hat was in style.



CAUSE FOR POPULARITY

"HOW does he happen to be such a favorite in society?"

"On account of his wonderful memory. He remembers what to forget just as clearly as he remembers what to remember."



MANY strings to one's beau do not always tie the matrimonial knot.

SAPPHO

By WILLIS LEONARD CLANAHAN

SAPPHO was a poetess,
A rare Greek exotic,
Who wrote verses more or less
(Mostly more) erotic.
She could write of anything,
And with fervor fashion it
Into rhyme, with swirl and swing,
Piquant, pert and passionate.

Loving was her favorite theme—
Love and wild desire—
And her shoes were full of steam
When she smote the lyre.
At the bookstores Sappho's songs
Filled the clerks with curses,
For they handled them with tongs,
So warm were her verses.

Sappho loved a gentle youth
By the name of Phaon,
Charming name! And good, forsooth,
To construct a lay on.
But her love was unrequited.
Sappho's youth and vim,
(Phaon told his friends) united,
Were too much for him.

So she gave her friends a shock,
One sad day, by jumping
From the high Leucadian Rock,
To ease her heart's thumping.
When she struck the wave below,
All her beauty spoiling,
That warm lady, ye may know,
Set the ocean boiling.

Clouds of steam ascended there,
In a manner scenic,
From that fond, poetic fair,
Drowned in seas Hellenic.
Thus died Sappho—fate most dire!
All the people wondered
At poor Phaon's lack of fire,
B.C. 600.

GIVING UP

By H. S. WALPOLE

AS he turned the corner of Little Mortimer Street he passed into a strangely cold isolation, the shutting down, as it were, of a heavy lid on the noisy, seething bubble and froth of the London melting pot; he had often realized it before, that swift transition from troubled crossings and tumultuous motors into the quiet gray and white of unchanging streets that seemed to have no history. It had always seemed to him London's most distinctive note. Paris and Berlin and New York had their definitely noisy quarters, their square masses of riot and confusion; there was never that sudden, amazing seclusion, the definite abiding place, in the very heart of the tumult, of the most beautiful silence.

So he had always felt it, and it had become a little piece of ever recurring experience, for which he had, half unconsciously, perhaps, been on the lookout. He loved London quite passionately, with that genuine love that is given to a few alone, and these few brethren of a very holy order. He would not, perhaps, have wished to remain there during the whole year, but he came back to it with an enthusiasm and reverence that knew no abatement as the years went on; he understood its moods and rebellions, its burning sun and shining rain, its sudden passions and splendidly fertile resource; he knew that the ground whereon he stood was holy.

Today, as he turned the familiar corner, the silence surrounded him as though it had been a very solemn music after some noisy fair. He had passed by the Brompton Oratory down

the long stretches of Earl's Court Road in a dream. He knew them so well; every stone was a friend, and the long line of omnibuses, red and green and yellow, moving against the gray solemnity of the Oratory, bore an old, familiar beauty. The trees in the road were brown and gold, and the sky had the October blue and dainty porcelain clouds of the most delicate white. London in October! He wondered if people knew how good it was, and then he crossed into the little gray cloister of Mortimer Street with a sigh of satisfaction.

He found, as he had expected, Mrs. Latymer waiting for him. She made a most excellent picture in her soft grays and blues against the dark oak of the wainscot and the red-gold of the fire, but he knew that she had chosen her position with a careful eye to light and shade, and he was unwillingly conscious that she had aged considerably within the last six months. He had not seen her during that period, because he had been away—abroad, Scotland, the country—at any rate, out of town, and—well, things had altered. He wondered whether his first critical glance had been influenced by those things, whatever they were—it might have been only time—and he tried to be fair, but there was undoubtedly a difference. No one would deny that she was handsome and knew how to dress—she always had known, but there was something artificial tonight that had not been there before. In her effort to please him she had probably gone just a little too far, a little farther than she had intended. It was, indeed, only an error of judgment, the

too evident jewelry at her breast, the just *too* blue feather at her hat, even the just *too* dark penciling beneath the eyes. It wasn't like her to overdo it—she had been always most studiously careful; and now, this reflected a little on his discretion.

He wondered whether she, too, had made discoveries during these six months. But there was no sign of question in his greeting of her. He was glad and he showed it, and he bent over her chair and took her hand.

Her "Well, old boy!" was splendidly unconcerned and unemotional as she looked up at him. "You're late, you know. You said five."

"If you only knew how I hurried," he said, laughing, but seriously enough to convince her that he had cared. "I taxied to Leicester Square, and then underground—I thought it would be quicker; but one thing and another kept me. As it is, things are left in an unholy disorder at the club."

"I'll forgive you," she answered, "because, you know, you're coming on to me later. I can stop for only half an hour now, but I'm expecting you this evening. There will be quite a crowd—Lily Dallas and Herrick and Tas Cutter—oh, and Mrs. Menzies—all of them really; and then we can get away and talk."

"Oh, I don't know!" He paused in his march across the room. "I'd half promised—"

"Oh, nonsense! A whole promise was made quite securely to me at least six months ago. Now don't be horrid the very first minute after your being away so long, but give me some tea like a dear, because I'm dying of thirst and I've precious little time." She spoke lightly enough, but she looked at him sharply for a moment. Oh, yes, she had noticed already!

He laughed and got out the tea things. It was an old ceremony and something that they had always done alone. He refused the assistance of his man, and kept the china and the rest in a little corner cupboard dedicated to that alone, a delicious cedar-wood cabinet that was most fragrantly

scented and contained the most delicate blue and white china. There was the silver kettle, and other silver things gleamed beautifully from dark recesses. Soon they glittered and sparkled in front of the fire, and she lit the tiny spirit lamp and knelt on the carpet to see that the flame burned surely.

It was all of a recognized intimacy that had needed long years for its present acknowledged strength, and, as he looked across at her kneeling to the flame, there was a sharp pain in the thought that he must in the next half-hour break it, this delightful intimate relation, to pieces. For a moment, he wondered whether it need be broken. Couldn't they, perhaps, go on—go on—well, to what? Oh, he could sever it gradually, gently, and she might never know. But in a moment he realized the falseness, the danger of such a position, and, remembering the events of these recent months, he flung the temptation from him.

"Ready!" she laughed up at him from the fire. "Oh, Rex, isn't it splendid having this again? Tea! Why I haven't tasted tea since I was in these blessed rooms last! Dear place!"

She leaned back, her hands clasped round her knees, her back against the armchair—the attitude in which he always thought of her. She had flung her hat on the chair, and the coils of her dark brown hair gleamed in the fire-light. He felt the old magic stealing over him. He knew that she was waiting for him to sit in the chair as of old, to prevent, as she used merrily to tell him, that horrible gliding back, when your support slips from you because there is nothing there to keep it—and so he used to keep it for her, and, with her head on his knees, her hand in his, she would tell him absurd stories and the latest scandal.

She was expecting him to come to her, but he stood, rather awkwardly, with the cakes in one hand and bread and butter in the other. He couldn't go to her, he realized, until he had spoken to her, and then, perhaps, he would never be able to go to her again.

"It's the cake you like; I carefully

chose it." He sat down in the other armchair opposite her and ate the cake. "Tea ready? Really boiling? Splendid! Now tell me what you have been doing."

But she looked at him steadily, straight in the eyes.

"Rex, what's the matter? What's happened?"

"Why, nothing. You imagine—" But he couldn't face her; his eyes fell before hers. "Well, there is—if you really want to know. There is a difference; something happened while I was away."

She played the game completely. Her hand did not tremble as she gave him his tea, and she lit her cigarette with steady fingers. "Now," she said, quite cheerfully, "tell me all about it."

"Well," he laughed uneasily, "I'm afraid that you will think it nothing, whereas it is, really, everything. I am going"—he hesitated for a moment at the platitude of it—"to begin again."

She puffed at her cigarette and smiled. "You used to tell me that often, a good many years ago. 'Indeed, indeed, repentance oft I swore'—but no, that's unkind. I don't want to laugh at you about it. Of course you would like to begin again—it would be a deuced good thing for all of us—but you are—how old? Forty-five. At thirty, perhaps, but at forty-five? Well, no—scarcely."

He could see that she was relieved. She had feared something else. This was an old alarm that had become almost amusing by much repetition. To begin again? Why, of course, he had often tried, and he knew that it would be very hard indeed to make her understand.

"No, really, Pam, it's serious this time. I mean it with all my heart. It will be hard to explain, because I know—you have laughed at it before; but this time I mean it."

"Well, what is it? Or, rather, of course I know. You have met someone again—someone who preached like Lady Callendar—who, *n'est-ce pas*, would pluck a brand from the burning?"

He saw that she was in no way

alarmed, and, indeed, he had cried "Wolf" very often; but he plunged straight into it, trying with all the brain that was his to convince her of his reality.

"Yes—I have met someone, but not in the way that you think. It was not altogether the meeting, either; there were—~~are~~—other things. You are quite right to remind me that I have said the same thing before. I have never, you must admit, been a hardened villain—perhaps all the more contemptible for that, but, at any rate, it has, at times, hurt."

"Ah! That with all of us," she cried—"the hardened villain! Oh, he's not on the scene at all—a figment of the novelist's brain!"

He nodded gloomily. "I have tried to get back—well, you know how often and how hopelessly. I've always gone under again, partly through my own weakness, partly—oh, yes, partly—through other people's strength. Well, I don't want to bore you—it's a short story quickly told. I have at last found someone who, knowing the whole story, is, nevertheless, willing to be one's friend, who is, moreover, absolutely straight—solid good, without blemish—and doesn't know it. That has never happened before; as soon as the whole knowledge has come, then the separation has come, too."

"She—" broke in Mrs. Latymer.

"It isn't," he answered, quickly. "It's young Ferroll—Charlie Ferroll, son of Lady Lucy—"

She burst out laughing. "Oh, Rex, I'm sorry! But, really, after that solemn beginning, with its warning and gentle allusion to past tragedy, and then to end up with Charlie Ferroll—a young man of the pincushion class, if ever there was one! Charlie Ferroll saves the soul of Reginald Wardour! It's too funny for words."

She was obviously relieved, and he realized more than ever the difficulty of driving it all into her; but she must be made to see.

"Ah!" he said quickly, "I knew you wouldn't understand. And, indeed, how could you? What am I—forty-

five? Well, you see, that and a stormy past leave a man cold. I couldn't go back again to passion now; it isn't there for me even if I wanted it." For a moment he caught her glance. "Ah! but of course you're different, you know; it needs no stating. But, don't you see, that's exactly what I do want now—friendship, the stolidity, the safety, the peace of it. It's the only thing that could pull me up now; and it's there, waiting for me."

"With a pincushion!" She repeated it almost viciously. "Now, Rex, don't be absurd. Charlie Ferroll may be a nice boy—I know that he is, as you say, straight, but oh, my dear, he's dull—"

She had been so careful up to that moment, but now, in her eagerness, she had forgotten; and he knew, by the way that it hurt him, that he had moved very far from her country during those recent months.

"No," he said gravely, "you don't understand. Let me try to explain. There have always been, in one's experience, three lots of people—the people who have known and have minded, the people who have known and haven't minded, and the people who haven't known at all. Now, I have spent, as is natural, my more recent years with the second class, and they haven't minded, because—to speak quite frankly—they have been as oneself. They, too, have gone under. But with the others, with the people who are still on the top, it has been always the same thing. They have liked me, we have been friends, and then suddenly the suspicion has come; the old story has been retold and they have melted away. That was hell to me once; I thought that I was getting used to it now, hardened, you know. And then suddenly this summer I met young Ferroll. We were in the same little place in Scotland, fishing, and there was no one else there who counted at all. For a few days he knew nothing, and then, I don't know why, I felt that I ought to tell him. The Ferrolls are, as you know, the very Temple of the Proprieties, and what Lady Lucy would have said if she had known that her darling was alone with

me I don't know. Anyhow, I told him everything—or almost everything—and then, of course, I thought that he would go, as the rest. He didn't—it didn't seem to make any difference. He knew that it was years ago when it all happened, and, unlike some of the good people, he believed that it was possible for the leopard to change his spots. He's not been a prig about it in any way, but I have resolved to break away from the whole thing, to give it up."

He looked at her, but she was sitting back in the chair, with her hand in front of her face to shield it from the fire. He went on stumbly:

"You see, girl, it must be the whole thing or none at all. I would have gone back long ago if there'd been anyone to help me but these good people." He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. "They are the last people to do anything. I have never before found anyone who would do anything—and now there's a chance. It all sounds excessively moral talking like this. I talk like a fool, I know, but—oh, the thing can't be explained! It is as though someone had suddenly opened a door and you saw the sky and a shining sun. It's getting back—"

She said nothing for a minute. There was a little pause broken by the ticking of a clock, the passing of a cab in the street below, the closing of some open door. Then she took her hand away from her face and looked up at him with a smile.

"Why, yes, Rex," she said, "I understand—a great deal better than you think. You speak as though it were new to me, as though I'd been outside it altogether. But I went through exactly the same thing. I suppose Adam and Eve thought at first that that one little fault wasn't going to keep them out of the garden forever. I thought so; you think so. It seems unfair, doesn't it? During those first years after it happened—after the earthquake—I couldn't believe that it meant forever. I had a kind of faith that it would all come right again—it seemed impossible that

one little thing should mean so much. People forget so quickly that I thought that that would be forgotten as well, but no—it grew. Year after year it all became more and more impossible, more hopeless. They forgot what it had originally been; it became something mysterious, terrible—the hinted suspicion was far worse than the original fact. And so I found that they would all have nothing to do with me, nothing at all. Of course I was lonely. I had always wanted friends. I couldn't—I suffered without them. And so I was forced, as you know—to the—well, the others.

"And then I found that they were all the same; that they had tried, too, and been turned out—for always. Minnie Basset, Captain Harrold, Derrold Ranson, all the same—the slip, the exposure, the exile and then the wild recklessness and the devil-may-care business that we both know. I tell you, Rex, it's women like Lady Ferroll who are responsible for more lost souls than the wickedest villain in Europe has to account for. Go back? Why, they won't have you back! I've tried and I know. We've all tried—but we're the lost sheep, the Unclassed, and there's no escape nor ever will be. I'm sorry, old boy, but you're one of us. It's too late; the door's closed."

She spoke quietly, but he knew her well enough to recognize the emotion behind the silence. She had never spoken very much to him about those former years, and he had never cared to ask her. He had found her with the others and had selected her for a certain refinement, a certain gentleness, which they, for the most part, so thoroughly lacked. But there was a tacit understanding among them that the cause, the origin, of their position must be taboo. Of course one knew vaguely—the whole world knew vaguely—but into the whole detail of it, the hour and the actors, no man must probe. And so of her he knew only what the world said, and that indeed was commonplace enough—*ménage à trois*, with the woman ultimately left as the scapegoat for the other two.

Once, he thought, she must have been charming; now that ostracism, that deliberate exile, had left its mark in a certain hardness of tone and a too noisy color—he, too, had felt the same. Yes, he had known that she had suffered, but she had never spoken about it before. He suddenly felt pity, compassion, sympathy; he was about to have it all, but she must stay.

He bent over the back of her chair and took her hand. "Pam, I'm sorry. I didn't know—you've never spoken to me much about things, and I've never asked. But it's a little different for a man, isn't it? Oh, of course, I know that it will be hard, but it's worth fighting for! It will be uphill all the way and a long time, but I mean to stick it out. Only, you don't know how I've hated all this—oh, for years back! Not you, girl—you've always been a brick—but the whole thing! I'm not that sort of fellow. Of course I know I was a blackguard once. I deserved what I got—I'm not going to grumble about it. But that was long ago. Now, now that I've got someone who believes in me, I can do it. It only wanted that, and if young Ferroll sticks to me, as he will, the rest can go hang! They'll come round one day. After all, there are plenty of chaps in their own set who, if everything was known, aren't exactly saints. But what I wanted to say, to make clear—well, it isn't very easy—is—you understand—I shall chuck all the old life and the people—everything. I can't drag the boy into it, and it's no use doing things by half."

He stopped and she said nothing, but her hand still rested in his. There was a long silence; then she looked up in his face and smiled.

"Of course I understand," she said. "No more teas—you're quite right; it's no use doing things by halves. But I don't think you know how hard things will be. I tried and thought I could stick it out, but they never forgive, these good people, never. And then there are his people. Do you suppose that they won't make a fight for it, his mother and the rest of them?"

He'll be at home, in their hands, and they'll never let him alone. They'll rake it all up—with additions. I don't think that you realize what it will be—either of you."

"I know," he said a little impatiently. "I've thought it all out. We've talked about it, of course, and I've told him everything, or nearly everything."

"I don't want to stop you," she answered. "It's a fine thing if you carry it through—fine for both of you, if you carry it through."

She rose and put on her hat. Then she held out her hand. "Well, it's good-bye. Perhaps we'll hear of each other sometimes. I shall like to know how you're faring. It's been a good time. It will make a bit of difference to me. It means giving up for me, too, you know. You've been different from all those others—always, and your friendship has meant a lot to me. I suppose I'm past saving, but your being there has just kept me on the line. There wasn't—there isn't—anything else to help very much. But it's no use being too much of a flopper—I shall go on all right. Only, when you're a saint, have a thought sometimes for a sinner whom you used to know once in your unregenerate days."

She smiled at him bravely, but there were tears in her voice, and she bit her lip to keep them back. For a moment she looked beautiful. The little touch of something common, something that he had noticed at first as strident and unnecessary, seemed to have pathos in it now—the rather daring bravery of the jewels and the color in her dress. He held her hand and suddenly bent forward and kissed her. Then the door opened and Ferroll came in.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" He turned back. "I didn't know."

"Oh, come in," said Wardour a little awkwardly. "Charlie, let me introduce you; Mrs. Latymer—Mr. Ferroll."

They shook hands and he watched them curiously. He would rather that this meeting hadn't happened, because it was a little as though he were already dragging the boy into that other set.

He had wanted to keep him right out of it, and now already—

She knew the boy by sight and wondered, as she looked at him, where the attraction lay. He was, like so many others of his kind, clean, healthy, straight, the traditional English product, with nothing, apparently, unusual about him, stolid, short, square, brown, with a closely cut black mustache, and very, very young. His eyes were good; clear brown and the keeper of no untoward secrets—a nice, clean boy, people said. But Wardour was cultured, impatient of conventionalities and the opposite of everything for which Ferroll stood.

But that, she saw, was the attraction. That very stolidity and simplicity of motive gave Wardour something on which to rely, and typified, she saw, that moral security and the rest that had seemed so excellent a thing. Oh, yes, she understood it! She couldn't—and indeed, she mustn't—fight against it.

She spoke for a little about the weather, and smiled gaily as she turned to Wardour and said good-bye again.

"No, don't come down. I can find my way. Thanks so much for the tea." Then, at the door, she said: "Tonight, you know, if you've nothing on, we'd be awfully glad to see you," and she was gone.

"I say!" Charlie Ferroll looked a little unhappy. "I hope I didn't turn her out, because, you know, I've come for just a moment—I couldn't snatch a minute to come before, and now I've got to get back to my people. I said five and it's hours past. But I thought I'd just have a look at you, and I wondered if you'd dine out with me tonight and then we'll have a talk—Prince's and eight-thirty?"

Wardour fancied that there was some uneasiness in his voice, as though his meeting Mrs. Latymer had been disturbing, unexpected. Did he know, he wondered, about her? He wished that she hadn't been there.

"Splendid! I'll be with you. We've lots to discuss. You're looking as fit

as a fiddle." He put his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Oh, I say—you know I've seen my people. I spoke to them about you. They—well, of course, they said things. I was ready for that and more, too, but we'll talk tonight. Don't be late." He laughed and soon had closed the door behind him.

Wardour sat in front of the fire, thinking. He felt, with a force that was unexpected, a poignant regret at her going. He seemed, during all those years, to have missed some side, some vision of her that was now suddenly presented to him for the first time. He had always thought of her as a good friend—at one time as something more; but there had been, too, that sense of disaster, almost, indeed, a subtle feeling of degradation. She was not, he used to assure himself, the kind of companion that a man with no past would have chosen. But now he saw her differently; her assertion of his own value to her stung his self-reproach. He wasn't, he knew, as fine as that. In fact, for the first time in his life, he wondered whether he wasn't after all, rather a poor creature. The contempt of the society that flung him out had given him, in sheer protest, a self-defense and approbation that had covered his body as with armor. They had been unfair. He had been justly or, at any rate, disproportionately condemned, and so he had argued that the cause of condemnation was slight to the vanishing point. Now, with her farewell to him in his ears, he wondered.

But at last, resolvedly, he threw it aside and flung himself into books and work. After all, she would find someone else, and as for her prophecies concerning himself, she did not know of what metal he was made; he would storm the castle and greet her, smilingly, triumphantly, from the walls. With Ferroll at his side he could do anything.

The sun threw lengthening lines over the darkening room and he sat at his desk writing busily. There was, after all, salvation in work; he could endure

the hard time if there was writing to come back to and Ferroll to believe in—but, nevertheless—poor Pam!

And then there was a knock at the door and his servant appeared. "A lady would like to speak to you for a moment, sir—Lady Ferroll."

At that name the color flew to his face and he started up. Lady Ferroll! And here in his room! Then, surely, it was a sign that the camp had already surrendered—Charlie had won the day and the very stronghold of his enemies was at his feet. In his excitement he sprang toward the door.

"Lady Ferroll! This is too kind of you. Please, won't you come in?"

But when she came he saw that there was no question of surrender. For whatever reason she was there, it was not that she might grant him her royal pardon and graciously accept him as a friend of her son's. In her entry there was a deliberate avoidance of any personal feeling; she was proudly, quietly detached, and her greeting was something coldly, unmistakably distant.

"Please forgive me, Mr. Wardour. I am afraid that you will regard this visit as a little impertinent. I will delay you only a moment."

She sat down in the chair that he placed for her and looked into the fire. She was a woman of over sixty, and her white hair and the soft gray of her dress made a charming effect against the firelight. His thoughts flew back to the other woman who had been there half an hour before. Lady Ferroll and Pamela Latymer! In the eyes of the world they were poles apart; now the contrast seemed scarcely in favor of the former.

"I must beg your pardon sincerely, Mr. Wardour, if I say anything that may hurt you. The step that I am taking would seem, I think, to a great many people extremely rash and, perhaps, inconsiderate. But the circumstances, I think, demand it."

She did not move, but sat watching the fire without a glance in his direction, without, indeed, at all considering him.

"I want to make an appeal."

At that his hand tightened for a moment on the back of his chair; then he came forward to her.

"I think I know, Lady Ferroll, what you are going to say. It is about Charlie."

"My son"—and there was emphasis on the word, as though she resented the Christian name from his lips—"has told me that he made your acquaintance in Scotland this summer. He proposes to continue it here. I have told him why it would be inadvisable, but he is young and does not understand. I have come to ask you to tell him."

"I have told him everything."

"Yes, he said that you had. But—forgive me if I seem unkind—he does not realize the consequences of maintaining that friendship as completely as—an older man would. You must know what it means."

"Ah, please—I think you do me an injustice there. Before I had known him two days I told him everything. I told him that it had all happened a very long time ago, and that I was very bitterly ashamed of it; that there would be no fear of anything of the kind ever happening again. But I told him also that people had not forgotten, that I was a man with whom his friends would not care to associate. I disguised nothing."

"No"—she looked up at him for a moment—"I am sure that you were perfectly honest. Please do not think for a moment that there is anything personal in what I say. I do not know you. I do not think that we have ever met until now. It is simply of my own son that I am thinking. You are a friend of his; you value his friendship. For that very reason I ask you to give it up—because you care for him—because you are an older man and know the world—because he is very young and does not know it. Because you care about him, you must not see him again."

With the name of her son something of that cold abstraction left her voice; she was, at once, more intimate and

personal—not at all because of Wardour, but simply because of her son.

"I do not think, Lady Ferroll," answered Wardour gravely, "that I shall do your son any harm. I think that I am at least honest enough for that."

"I am sure that you will not," she answered, "but—please forgive me again, Mr. Wardour, if what I say hurts you; I do not mean to be cruel—one cannot, if one would, forget the past. I do not know—I have never asked—what you once did, but that being there, it remains, I am afraid, to the end. Society is like that—often very foolish and hasty in its judgments, but it is also quite relentless. One would see that, oneself, and, having done something of that kind, one must make up one's mind to it and go on quietly to the end."

Her placid, self-congratulatory use of the word "quietly" irritated him beyond control. What did she, what *could* she, know about it all? Her life had been safely guarded from the very first, fenced in and securely walled; there had never been any question of breaking loose or looking over into the forbidden garden. There had been no conquest because there had been no struggle; she had never fought for an instant against her pleasant environment and easy progress. What could she know? And again that vision of the other woman came back to him. She had known what the struggle was and had not given in.

"No," he said hotly, "that is where you are wrong, Lady Ferroll. To men as unfortunate as myself quiet resignation is not possible. We must fight to get back or we are lost altogether. I am only asking you to give me a chance. You have admitted yourself that I will not harm your son—at least, willingly—and his friendship will help me more than I can say."

But even while he spoke he knew instinctively, certainly, that he was making no impression at all. He realized suddenly, in a flash, what it was that Pamela Latymer had meant by her warning. Had there been op-

position, sharp denial or furious contempt, he could have answered it, he would have defended his position bravely and eloquently.

But this—this soft, unyielding calm that betrayed no anxiety, but was quietly and soberly confident of the strength of its position, frightened him. This placid old lady, with her airs and graces, had shown him beyond all hope where he stood; where, indeed, he must ever stand in the eyes of all good people. Good people! It was no concern of theirs at all, he realized, what happened to him—he did not enter their horizon; but it *did* matter what happened to one of their own number.

When he had pictured things in Scotland he had fancied that his own "redemption"—he smiled at the word—mattered, but now he realized that it simply didn't concern them at all; the romantic interest was not there—he was simply, in their eyes, a man who had once done a poor thing and been found out.

"I am thinking of my son," said Lady Ferroll. "It is not good for him that he should know you. It is altogether impossible; it will only lead to distressing situations, and it cannot last. One mustn't," she added firmly, "mix life."

"No," he answered quietly; "you are quite right. I understand. But I wonder if it is really mixing things as much as you think. It is, after all, only given to a minority to pass their lives securely, without spot or blemish; those persons are much to be envied. But don't you think that perhaps they have, for the very reason that their life has been so secure, something to learn from the unfortunates who have fared otherwise? I do honestly believe that a little more mixing would be very good for the world."

But she looked at him quietly, with that same abstract feeling that told him that she could never possibly understand.

"Perhaps, Mr. Wardour, it may be good for some people—for myself, no; and I cannot believe that it would be good for my son. He is starting life;

I do not think that such knowledge would help him. I do not think that you yourself would care to give up so much for what would be, I am afraid, a very miserable isolation."

And suddenly he saw that she was perfectly right. It would not do. The knowledge gave him no dismay. He had thought that that other life would be sun; now he saw, through her, that it would be a closed and stuffy room—a cage, in which he would die for want of air. Those "good people"—with their little inch of life and disdain of all the rest!

He suddenly flung his arms above his head and laughed. "You are quite right, Lady Ferroll, perfectly! I have made a mistake. After all, even for the unfortunate, life is not such a bad thing. We have experienced and can sympathize! I will write to Charlie and tell him."

She looked at him with evident surprise. She had expected that it would be a long fight, needing constant resource, a protracted campaign. And now he had suddenly yielded for no reason at all. He could not have cared very much for Charlie. She was even a little hurt on her son's behalf.

"You will write and tell him?" she said. For the first time she considered him. He seemed glad and happy about it. There was no dismay in his surrender. But, as he looked at her, he understood perfectly. He saw Charlie through her eyes. There had been things in Scotland that had irritated him vaguely but persistently. And now he knew what that had meant, what it would always mean. It would be a life of cotton wool, a world of closed doors and fastened windows. Why, even if they received him they would never forget—he would always be degraded in their eyes; and for that he would surrender all the life that he had—freedom, friends, even, in their own degree, a good name. Pam had said that he could help her. There was work for him to do—among black sheep, perhaps, but better than a scornful isolation among white ones.

She rose with an air of relief. "Thank you, Mr. Wardour. I am sure that it is the best thing for both of you. I am very grateful to you."

She was evidently relieved, greatly relieved.

"Perhaps, after all," he said, as he went with her to the door, "it is better for the leopard that he should not change his spots."

She did not understand, but she said as she left the room: "You will write to my son and tell him that you will not see him again?"

"I will tell him," he answered.

And when she had gone, he sat down and wrote a letter:

DEAR CHARLIE:

It won't do. We couldn't, I am afraid, get on, after all. I am not sure that I am quite ready to give up my friends and surroundings altogether, and I do not think

that you would find me quite the right sort of fellow. It's better to drop it at once, now, before we go any farther. It was a good time in Scotland. I shall always be grateful and shall never forget. The best of luck to you. Don't think hardly of me, but the best way is not to think of me at all.

Yours,

R. WARDOUR.

He thought for a moment and then wrote a telegram:

LATYMER, 19 Tressle Street, S. W.

With you tonight eight-thirty.

WARDOUR.

He looked from his window into the darkening street. The lamps passed in endless procession into the far distance. Over London there hung a golden mist.

He flung the window open and leaned out.

"My God," he cried, "what an escape!"



HER HAND

By GORDON JOHNSTONE

I HELD her hand, while in the pine tops sighing
I heard the ghost of yesterday bewail:
"There's many a slip in Hymen's clumsy tying;
The journey's long 'tween curb and altar rail."

I held her hand, while those around were staring
And nudging one another in their glee.
Unmindful of the way that things were faring,
I gazed at her and she gazed back at me.

There in her eyes I read of wondrous graces
And deemed the ground I'd ta'en a sainted spot.
I held her hand, which held, forsooth, four aces,
And saw her scoop our little fat jackpot.



TIME and taximeters wait for no man.

"I, TOO, IN ARCADIA"

By MARIE CONWAY OEMLER

BETWEEN the dry, caustic Cortlandt Smith, famous—many said infamous—general attorney for the International Ores Company, and the artist, Pierre Lamont, existed one of those curious and contradictory friendships which add to the wonder and allure of life. Immense, black-bearded, with a mane of intractable black hair, one had sooner supposed Lamont an anarchist out of employment than a seeker after the white things of the spirit, the blue things of the soul.

Upon this bluff, splendid son of the gods the cold attorney, drawing upon a depth unsuspected by his wife and his enemies, expended his remnant of romance and affection; he adored this man, whose friendship he felt to be his last outpost upon the rainbow coasts of fancy. Suffocating in the grim, virginal arms of respectability, the artist offered him a breathing space of freedom and repose; openly, with laughter, Pierre did those things which he himself vehemently longed to do, stood proxy for those sins he wished but feared to commit, those pleasures which eluded his lean, longing hands. And over Lamont's graceless shoulder he looked at life, blinking, his cold eyes warming in his masklike face.

One pays, however, for whatever one gets; and Lamont paid for this friendship a price which at once enriched and impoverished him. For the fortunes of the painter were not at this important epoch so flourishing as his genius deserved; and Smith's idea of friendship was to bestow upon its object success, worldly success, the power of money.

Looking about him for ways and means to further the fortunes of Pierre, the eagle glance of the attorney lighted upon Mrs. Vansittart, and at once he divined her perfect suitability.

Along with colossal fortune and an immeasurable egotism, Providence had bestowed upon Mrs. Vansittart a beauty somewhat bovine, as of, say, a cream-colored prize cow. Refraining from further painting the lily, Providence had left its creation free of the burden of brains or the zest of humor. She was complacent, her husband complaisant; and obeying the hypnotic suggestion of the attorney, made to believe that she wished an unknown but soon-to-be-famous artist to paint her portrait, Mrs. Vansittart became the instrument which caused the laurel to descend upon Lamont.

Gemmous, perfumed, with that diamondlike rudeness which is the hallmark of the elect, an ivory idol not to be lightly touched by heretic hands, she was led by Smith into the alien atmosphere of Bohemia regnant in Lamont's *atelier*. The artist looked with perplexity and apprehension upon her face, void of vivacity, turned upon Smith a glance of mingled reproach and appeal, and met in return that cold and ironical smile which always left him at a loss.

When her hours for sitting had been decided and her costume chosen, Mrs. Vansittart, mildly enlivened, permitted a gleam of interest to escape through her ivory lacquer; her eyes expressed almost human intelligence. This beautiful bearded giant pleased her, piqued her curiosity; the unquenchable feminine for a moment

escaped caste and convention and primitively responded to his resplendent virility. And with a saturnine crooked smile Smith stood aside like the devil satisfied, knowing that Lamont's future was assured. He had, he reflected, pressed the button of interest and vanity; the lady would do the rest.

When Mrs. Vansittart had been whirled away in her limousine, Smith, jubilant, went back to give words of counsel to Lamont. The artist was staring moodily at the ceiling, his fists doubled in his pockets, his lips pursed into a doleful whistle. At sight of the attorney's satisfied countenance, he burst into sudden Homeric laughter.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he shouted. "But she is of a drollery unique, that one! Behold me embrace with ardor the doctrine of transmigration, my little Smith. That lady was once a sacred cow, be assured of it."

"She's more than a sacred cow; she's a fashionable fetich," Smith informed him. "And does it dawn upon your mind of mud that she has bidden you to one of her sacred receptions?"

Lamont's face fell; terror seized upon him.

"*Nom d'un cochon!*" he groaned, with distended eyes. And he clung to Smith as a drowning man; he kissed him on the cheek, as a child entreats a mentor. "See, my little Smith, how the sweat pours from me! Do you not perceive that I shall be doomed to madness if you force upon me this so terrifying lady, whose vacant eye appalls me, reduces me to despair? And shall I go among others like her, ruining my good stomach with their tea and their many little cakes? See, now, I am a man, *hein?* Very well, then; I will not go! I say to you, truly, I will not go!"

"Oh, yes, you will; you'll have to go," said Smith, inexorable, without pity. "I shall come for you, myself. Simpleton, I am making your fortune! I cannot allow you to behave like an unspanked child. Do you not wish to succeed?"

"Not at this so fearful price, that I employ my gifts to render immortal

a being to whom the good God has denied sense and soul," raged Lamont. "Me, I do not wish to paint her; there is nothing to paint." And he said tragically: "Why, my friend, have you brought this evil thing upon me?"

Speculatively, supporting his chin upon his palm, Smith studied him. He reveled in these temperamental outbursts; it gave him a sense as of omnipotence to pit his clear, compelling brain against the artist's, and when he had conquered, he felt as if he had bent a thunderbolt in his hand.

He said, in his slow, careful voice: "You are a very great genius, I think, Lamont. Also, like all geniuses, you are a very great fool. In spite of that, I shall make you rich, famous, bring the world, my world, to acknowledge you. There is no use kicking against the pricks," he added deliberately. "You will come with me to Mrs. Vansittart's Friday tea and musicale."

Lamont's face had brightened. "I have," he rejoiced, "but two whole shirts, and always one is with the Chinaman. And yesterday I pawned my trousers, my good trousers that I wear upon occasions, also the waistcoat in which I do honor to the social sanctities. Therefore, what you propose is impossible, not to be done; *n'est-ce pas?*"

"It has to be done."

"Very well, I shall go!" shouted Lamont. "Truly, I shall go in this raiment, and that lady's lackeys shall lay hands upon me to cast me forth. And I shall, of course, break the necks of these wretches. Therefore, I shall infallibly end in the jail, and you, disturber, shall also be in disgrace with fortune."

"Business is business," said Smith briskly, and drew his chequebook from his pocket. "As the Vansittart attorney, I tender you first payments for the projected portrait." And he handed Lamont a cheque which made the artist gasp and then give vent to a howl of joy.

"Lamont," said the attorney, striking the iron while it was hot, "the International wants some, ah—er—mural

things, you know, for the new office buildings: girls running around in the air, holding dinky little lamps, husky boys with bunchy biceps, swinging hammers, and women in floaty night-gowns—Inspiration and Labor and Commerce, and that sort of thing. Now, you paint Mrs. Vansittart, give the old girl a good show, and the other job will follow. Remember, her husband's president of the International." And his voice became respectful, as one who might say, "Remember Deity."

Lamont smoothed out the cheque lovingly. "Do you know"—he leaned toward the lawyer—"Julia and I shall with this be as gods!" He seized his hat and prepared to depart. "First to have this heavenly bit of paper made into money, glorious, spendable money! Then to Julia, and to bid Malone and Wallingford and Kirby come and be happy. Ho! We shall feast; we shall rejoice; and you, beatific friend, shall be one of us!"

Smith, dining with them that night, watching Lamont and his fellow painter, friend and model, the beautiful dark Julia, realized that he had, perhaps, assumed an undertaking which would engage his full powers, for between this woman and himself would be a supreme struggle.

An artist herself, talented, beautiful, with a somber experience of life but a true and beautiful knowledge of its verities, deeps and shallows, a spirit-like clarity of vision, she had been Lamont's inspiration—the attorney thought, damnation.

"Do not let him make you too respectable, Pierre," she had said, nodding at Smith. "Let him make you anything else but too successful and happy. That is fatal to temperaments like yours." Under the raillery of her tone lurked a certain intensity, a note as of warning. And she had looked past the laughing Pierre to the silent Smith, almost with appeal.

When Lamont appeared with the lawyer, Mrs. Vansittart, perceiving upon his outward aspect the hallmark of her world, received him with an almost friendly graciousness. In this

scented whirl of many women, who murmured polite pleasantries, dressed charmingly and looked at him with naive interest or veiled invitation, Lamont was less bored than he had expected to be. Brown, sturdy, with a freshness as of wind and rain and sun upon him, he found himself eagerly taken to the hearts of these idle women avid for new experiences.

"I have never," said the pretty girl who poured tea for him, "met a real, live, on-the-road-to-fame artist before, Mr. Lamont. Anyhow, I thought that artists were—different. Now you—" She allowed herself to look up at him through her eyelashes, a tried and tested glance calculated to allure. He met it, amused.

"And I—"

"Oh, you are—yourself." Her voice was sugar-coated.

"Alas, no, mademoiselle, you are deceived! I am not myself," he sighed. Misunderstanding, she thought he jibed, and with a heightened color, she said:

"I take an interest, a real interest, in art, Mr. Lamont."

"That is a most improper thing to do, mademoiselle," he assured her. "With men," he supplemented, "art is a sense; with women, it is a sensation."

"And shall you not," she wondered, with delicious impertinence, "also become a sensation, Mr. Lamont?"

"I am desolated that I cannot answer you. But that," he said with a shrug of his shoulders, "is not for me to say. It is with the good God and Monsieur Smith. And do you think," he wondered in his turn, "that the sensation of being a sensation might be a pleasant sensation, mademoiselle?"

She said thoughtfully: "I should think it might be like eating your favorite dessert to the strains of the Moonlight Sonata, played by a heavenly pianist, and having your back scratched by an angel at the same time."

"And you yourself are an angel, yes?"

"You mustn't suggest that I'd do things behind your back," she reproved. "Mrs. Vansittart's looking

this way, and seems to want you, Mr. Lamont."

Mrs. Vansittart had, indeed, beckoned to him, and in another second he found himself looking into the sapphire eyes of the tall girl whom his hostess introduced as her husband's niece, Edith Vansittart. From her bronze hair to her arched foot his artist's eye could find no flaw in her, save, perhaps, her almost icy repose. But even in this she reminded him of a still, white pinnacle, snow-covered, untouched, soaring into the cold, clear, blue depths of far northern skies. She seemed to him rather one of those dear dead girls of Old World romance alive again. Those maidens, whose vanished beauty glorifies what men know of Greece, might, in their first exquisite bloom, have had such lithe and lovely lines; Phryne's wondrous grace may have been so delicately rounded; Daphne's white limbs and pearly face so suggestive of spring and blossoming.

One saw that life fitted her as a beautiful and jeweled garment, that for her the harsh lineaments of fate had been swathed in silver tissue. Enraptured, Lamont turned upon her a glance full of wonder and delight, before which her eyes drooped. Conscious to the core of her soul of this big brown painter, her heart fluttered deliciously and she took refuge in those cool feminine conventions, those airy graces, which women erect as barriers between themselves and men they fear to love.

When Lamont had at last left Mrs. Vansittart's, dragged thence by the dragon Smith, the asphalt, glistening in a fine twilight drizzle, seemed to him as the golden streets of Heaven, peopled by an infinity of celestial wayfarers. He walked on air, his chin up, his eyes dark pools of passion.

The dyspeptic lawyer looked with envy at his young and radiant face, and with a satirical smile he asked:

"Well, and what do you think of your afternoon, eh?"

"That Madame Vansittart—she is formidable," said the painter thoughtfully. "A body without a soul. The

ox has more temperament, the mule more vivacity, the ass more humor." He added, after a moment's silence:

"But her niece, that adorable Edith! *Hélas!* What a girl! Wonderful, charming, enchanting! I bow before this maiden of many perfections; I burn to transfer to canvas those tints of the rose and the sea shell." His voice, full of rich chords, grew sweet and plaintive. "Alas, my friend, that loveliness should be so frail, youth so fleeting; that stone and canvas live while beauty dies! That good God of ours makes so little beauty, one imagines He is jealous of it, *n'est-ce pas?* Me, I would I were in His place but for a minute!"

"When your fancy falls from usurping the place and prerogatives of the Almighty," remarked the lawyer, "permit me to remind you that Mrs. Vansittart's sittings begin next Tuesday. And it is very probable that Miss Edith Vansittart will accompany her aunt."

And thus did Fate seize Lamont by the ear, and with many buffets of her bony fist thrust upon his unwilling brows a cast iron wreath of bays.

He painted Mrs. Vansittart; one may see her, soulless as an empty shell without an echo of the sea, gorgeous in purples and pearls. "Portrait of Mrs. V.—By Lamont," has appeared in many magazines, with large notices concerning Mrs. V, and, perhaps, a paragraph for the painter. Those mural paintings which visitors admire so much in the International's offices and corridors are also Lamont's, as is the famous "Priscilla" for which Edith Vansittart, chaste, cold, with Puritan reserve, posed as model.

The velvet skin of Edith Vansittart veiled implacable will, steel determination. Possessed of every virtue, she had no vice save the lack of it, and this appalling perfection was unlightened by any gleam of humor. But brought face to face with what seemed to him a cherished ideal realized, Lamont flung himself before her with frenzied adoration. And when in the background appeared the dark, brooding face of Julia, he turned from it, not with un-

kindness, but without regret; he first neglected and then forgot.

And Julia, with her cruel clarity of vision, saw the end toward which Smith urged Lamont, that end to which Edith Vansittart was so potent a means.

She had been in his studio one day, when, before their regular hour, Mrs. Vansittart and Edith came. Julia was posing for a poster; in a scarlet dress, with bare arms and throat, a rose in her straight, heavy hair, she leaned forward, ivory pale, with narrowed, mocking eyes, the smile of the Mona Lisa upon her curved, red mouth.

Edith flashed over the beauty so different from her own a quick glance of jealousy and dislike; the pale eyes of Mrs. Vansittart stared with lifeless insolence. And as Julia left the room she heard the placid voice of the older woman.

"Who is that person?" And then, with heavy raillery: "You painters call them models, don't you?"

"Yes," said Lamont absently.

Julia, realizing that the end had come, went downstairs with tingling ears. To keep back her tears, she laughed.

She found awaiting her at home the kind, pale, intellectual Malone, Lamont's friend as well as hers, and at sight of his smile, so sweet and so melancholy, her heart warmed toward him.

"I came to rest myself in your company, to draw a little upon your strength, Julia," he said. "You refresh me like a mountain breeze, the icy caress of mountain water, the warm smile of spring sunshine. And I also beg a favor, a great favor, my friend. I wish to borrow your face, your wise, dark, beautiful face, for my 'Semiramis.'"

He noted then her pallor, her drooping lips, the pain and passion of her dark eyes, and with a kind and tender gesture he laid his hand upon her shoulder:

"Julia! Is it so bad as this?" And understanding fully her grief and its cause, he said in his gentle voice: "We must not blame him too much, our poor

Pierre. They baited a golden hook with the semblance of a goddess. And his work, and you, my poor Julia, must pay the penalty."

"And is there nothing to be done?" she asked. But he, with a shadow dimming his clear eyes, shook his head.

"These things are on the knees of the gods, Julia. And to jog the elbow of destiny is to invite disaster."

After a long pause she lifted her head, her eyes full of tears.

"I will be glad to help you with your 'Semiramis,' Walter," she said. "It will perhaps help to fill out my days so full of emptiness, of despair."

A copy of Poussin's beautiful picture, her favorite, hung upon her wall. Malone's eyes dwelt upon the youthful band pausing at that gray and melancholy tomb to read its touching legend: "Et in Arcadia Ego."

"To love is not only to suffer, but to grow, Julia," he said. "Let us thank the Great Dispenser if, at least, we have known the woods of spring, so that when we pause before the tomb of passion, of lost illusion, Julia, we can read that inscription with resignation, even with an autumn gladness. For it is something to be able to say, 'I, too, dwelt in Arcadia.'"

If Lamont missed Julia at all, he was at first but vaguely conscious of it. For Smith had done his work but too well. Pierre's studio had become a fashionable rendezvous; engagements rattled upon him like hail; and he was the fiancé of Edith.

But over the artist a change had crept. The hand of Vansittart, like the chastening hand of God, was upon him. He had been forced to move his studio. One by one, the clever, irresponsible friends of Bohemian days had been sent adrift, he knew not how. The change was not only in himself, but in his work as well. When he had painted one portrait of a pretty, insipid woman in diaphanous draperies, he had to begin upon another just like it.

And when by any chance he met one of his old friends he was restrained, ill at ease, realizing that if the many envied, these few more discerning ones

regretted. This gnawing knowledge threw him into transports of anger and despair; a mortal sadness oppressed him. Acutely aware that he had dissolved the pearl of his genius in the vinegar of his desire, he knew, also, that Edith did not understand; that if these regrets were known to her, she would have looked upon him as one regards a fool. Even his approaching marriage could not dispel this melancholy introspection.

Upon one of those opaline days of early autumn, when the tang of turning seasons is in the air and the wind frolics like a child, walking moodily along the street, he came face to face with Julia—a serene, beautiful Julia, whose face held an added power, a hint of deeper sweetness. He had not seen her for about a year, and he stopped her with a glad cry:

"Julia! Oh, it is the dear Julia herself! Stop, my friend; give at least a word to me, who hunger to hear you speak!"

Julia's quiet eyes read him with unerring intuition. As they fell into step together, the longing grew upon him to pour into her understanding ear all that bitterness which surcharged and oppressed him.

"Let us visit one of those delectable restaurants, a haunt where the waiters are old friends," he suggested.

Julia hesitated. But he had probably heard, she reflected, and this was his method of letting her know that he knew; it was kind and gracious, this ignoring of what would have given them both pain to discuss. Besides, her stay in the city was now but of short duration; soon the seas would be between them.

When they had found their old places and the old waiter had volubly expressed his pleasure in thus seeing them together again, Lamont's clouded face cleared like an April sky.

"You are of a venerable antiquity, is it not, my friend?" he asked the waiter.

"M'sieu," replied the old Frenchman, his hand upon his heart, "to please you, that good Methuselah was

the uncle of my grandfather; may God give them both rest!"

"Good!" said Lamont. "And you are, I take it, familiar with the fable, sacred to our little La Fontaine and M. d'Æsop? Doubtless, also, in the world's youth you have heard of that ass which would wear the skin of the lion, yes?"

"It is even so, m'sieu; who has not?" agreed the old man, polite but puzzled.

"And did you ever," Lamont inquired, "know of the lion that would wear that ass's skin, nephew of Methuselah?"

"Truly, I have missed many things, m'sieu," admitted the old man cautiously. "This is one of them."

"See, then, me," advised Lamont, his hand upon his broadcloth-covered breast. His smile was whimsical, but in his eyes was sorrow. "This seems but broadcloth, no? Even to you, Julia? My friends, these so modish garments are of the skin of the ass. It is thus that Lamont is covered. I who speak assure you this is true."

"As m'sieu pleases," said the old man submissively. "But I who hear assure you that such covering is agreeable to most mankind. And you have decided upon the breakfast, m'sieu? Try, I implore, but a little of the grape fruit. It is of a heavenliness!"

"Julia," pleaded Lamont, as they emerged again into the street, "come to my studio, will you not? There is much that I wish to tell and to show you. Come, my friend."

And with an enigmatical smile, both sad and tender, she assented. She looked around his new *atelier* with critical, appreciative eyes, and with her hands behind her back, her characteristic attitude, she went from one new canvas to another.

"I remember," she said, in a voice which pierced his heart, "those ideal faces which once attracted you—rapt, expectant faces of young girls awaiting love; poignant faces of women, the mothers of dead children; strong, powerful faces of men who conquer destiny; calm faces of the old, who see death approach. I remember when for hours

you would pursue them through the streets, those delicate and divine countenances, upon which the soul had left its mysterious and indelible impress."

"And these?"

"These," with a faint smile, "are very pretty, Pierre. And it is that you have become a fashionable painter, is it not?"

"Alas, *Mon Dieu!* but it is so, my little Julia," he said in a dismal voice, with a groan from the depths of his chest. "Sit here upon the divan, Julia. I will sit upon the floor near you; I will then have courage to tell you."

"So. Now drop your hand upon my hair, Julia—"

"I might imperil your laurels."

"Never long for laurels, Julia; they are damnable things, those laurels. Always they give one a headache, a headache which is incurable, which destroys peace and patience."

He reached up, took her hand, her slender hand with its deft, strong fingers, and laid it gently upon his forehead. "Ah, but that is good!" he sighed. "Let us now explain this foolishness, which has kept us apart."

Neither heard the tap at the door which announced Edith Vansittart, who, after a second's irresolute pause, opened the door softly and stepped into the room, intending to surprise Pierre. She surprised herself more. Seated upon the floor, his eyes upturned to the compassionate face of Julia, he was pouring out in a torrent of rapid French his anger, bitterness, despair.

The eyes of the two women locked—in Edith's was flaming jealousy, in Julia's cool appraisal. Lamont scrambled to his feet, and smiling, with outstretched hands, hastened to his fiancée.

"My dear Edith. How charming of you, and how glad I am to see you!" he exclaimed. "You arrive in time to save Julia from martyrdom. I have been boring her to death with a dissertation upon my failures."

Upon his frank face neither embarrassment, dismay nor guilt appeared, and this evidence of, to her,

effrontery filled her with anger. Her eyes glittered; a vengeful red stained her cheek; her lips hardened.

"Madonna!" said Julia to herself. "But he has a bad time before him, that poor Pierre!"

"What is that person to you?" demanded Edith, pointing to Julia.

"Julia?" said Pierre wonderingly. "Do you not remember that once before I told you Julia had always been my friend, sometimes my model, always my inspiration?"

"Now I wonder why it is you've never mentioned your inspiration since?" insinuated Edith.

"But I never had occasion to, my child," protested Pierre patiently. "Always you disliked hearing of my old friends, is it not?" And, surprised, he looked at her with a new scrutiny, doubting the evidence of his senses. Thin-lipped, acrid, shrill—was this Edith?

"I think," she returned, with an insolent glance at the silent Julia, "that I had good reason to disapprove of your friends. Send this person away, Pierre. I wish to talk with you."

Lamont straightened himself. Julia watched him, breathless, realizing that a crisis had been reached, that his future hung in the balance. Drawing a deep breath, he said with a new thrill of speech, masterful and intense:

"No! What you have to say must be said before Julia. It is due to us both."

"And that I refuse to do!" returned Edith, clenching her hands. "Do you think I will be submitted to the indignity of begging explanations in the presence of your—your—" Her voice trailed into the silence of odious significance.

That such a thought should find lodgment in what he had believed to be a mind of pure light! He had no words to reply. With a sad and bewildered air, his hands hanging at his sides, he stared at his shattered idol.

"Edith! Edith!" It was a cry of pain, of renunciation.

With fingers that trembled she tore off his ring and flung it at him. When

he would have approached, she warded him off as one might a leper.

"I will have nothing more to do with you!" she said, stammering with rage and with a furious gesture. "All is over between us. I would fear to lose my soul if I continued to know you."

"And if you should lose your soul, that little soul so full of malice, never would you find it again—it is too small," said the quiet voice of Julia, like a spray of icy water. "What you insinuate is false. It is true that I once loved him," and she pointed to Pierre, a sweeping gesture, full of grace. "It is also true, mademoiselle, that, fearing to interfere in what he thought success, unable to withdraw him from a perilous course, I withdrew, sorrowful. What else could I do, I who had fostered his genius, but leave him to you, who smothered it? And even—if what you hint were true, I should be unashamed, for always I had pointed to the stars; it remained for you—to point to the mud."

"You are mad!" said Edith, with shaking lips. "I helped him—and he is unworthy. What was he—what would he still be—except for me and mine? It is to us he owes his success, his fame."

Julia looked at her wonderingly. "And what are you or yours, or what am I, or anybody, in the scale with genius?" she asked. "But it is useless to talk, to explain. Never could you understand, mademoiselle."

"I understand that I was a fool to descend to his level, to dream that I could raise him to mine," said Edith coldly.

"It is perhaps so, my child," said Lamont gravely. "Me, I was a greater one to share that dream."

Without answering, she swept from the room, slamming the door behind her. Lamont turned, and met the eyes of Julia, full of sympathy and understanding.

"I foresee an end of this," he said, waving his arm around the sumptuous room, his face expressive of a naïve relief. "And after this, the deluge, Julia—the deluge of old friends, and work for work's own sake, and freedom—and you, Julia, you! Ah, little one, it is that I have been mad! I have snatched the shadow and let the substance go! Too long have we been apart, Julia!"

With a white and altered countenance, she shrank back, staring at him.

"Is it possible?" she asked in a frightened voice. "Pierre, is it possible that you do not know?"

"I know at last that it is you, Julia, you that I love, that I have always loved," he said passionately.

"It is too late," she replied lifelessly. "I was married to Walter Malone last week." She lifted her head. "He needed me—he loved me—he helped me," she went on. "And when I came to know him, to learn how noble and brave and kind he is, to know that nothing, not even I, whom he loved, could win him for a moment from his truer self, I, who was lonely and deserted, took his hand, his good, safe hand, to cling to. It saved me from you—and from myself."

"So I have lost you," said Lamont.

"We go to Rome next month."

"It is probable that I, also, shall go abroad—maybe to Egypt," he remarked. "Good-bye, my little Julia. God make you happy!"

At their feet, unnoticed, lay Edith Vansittart's ring, its jewels emitting many-colored rays in the noonday sunlight. And facing them hung the copy of Julia's favorite picture, which she had given Pierre years ago. His eyes lingered upon those gay and youthful figures, following the finger of that one which pointed to the inscription upon the tomb; and as Julia's light footsteps died in the distance, he repeated in a voice full of despair: "And I, too, dwell in Arcadia!"



A WOMAN'S CHOICE*

By L. H. AND C. T. DAZEY

CAST

MADELINE MORRIS (*a young actress*)

LOUISE (*fitter in the dressmaking establishment of Madame Françoise*)

JIM MONROE (*a wealthy man about town*)

JENNIE (*an assistant, aged about fifteen*)

PLACE: *New York City.*

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE—A showy apartment in the establishment of Madame Françoise. There are draperies over the openings at the right, left and center, large mirrors everywhere, and a triple mirror and a figure with a fashionable dress on it at the right. At the left are a large sofa and a small table with a decanter and wine glasses. The room is bright, furnished in green and gold. Fashion papers and sample pieces of goods are lying everywhere.

JENNIE enters through the curtains at the left, carrying a lavender dress of fashionable cut on her arm. She is a typical dressmaker's assistant, with a trim figure and a large, blonde pompadour. She has a bored expression on her face. She starts to put the dress on the sofa, then looks around to see if anyone is present, stands before the mirror and drapes the dress over her, complacently admiring the effect.

JENNIE (*puffing out her hair*)
Lavender's my color, all right.

(*As she stands gloating over herself, LOUISE enters. She is an attractive young woman about twenty-five, very plainly dressed and of the utmost refinement.*)

LOUISE (*quietly but reprovingly*)
Jennie!

(*JENNIE, caught in the act, drops the dress, then picks it up and lays it on the sofa with a haughty air, as though nothing were wrong.*)

How often has Madame Françoise asked you not to handle her customers' things? Don't let it happen again.

(*JENNIE is sulky and does not speak, but shrugs her shoulders behind Louise's back.*)

What time is Miss Morris's appointment?

JENNIE (*sulkily*)
Half past one.

LOUISE (*looking at her watch*)
She should be here. She is usually so prompt.

MADELINE (*speaking off at the right*)
I'm late. Guess I'll go right in.

(*She enters through the curtains at the center. She is a showy young woman about twenty-eight, with very blonde hair.*)

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She is very pretty, somewhat vulgar but with a good heart. She comes in breezily and nods to JENNIE, then goes down to LOUISE and kisses her affectionately on both cheeks. There is evidently a real affection between the two women in spite of their opposite types.)

Hello, Jennie! (To LOUISE.) Hello, dearie! I couldn't help being late this time. Rehearsal all morning. Gee, it keeps you on the jump! New play, new clothes and a new beau.

(*She starts to take off her hat. JENNIE assists her.*) What d'ye think of my hat? (*Goes on without waiting for a reply.*) Jim says it's too big. Ain't that just like a man?

(*She starts to take off her dress. JENNIE assists her.*)

LOUISE

It might be less—well, less striking if it were smaller.

MADELINE

Oh, that's all right for you, dear, but I like a hat that's talkative! I'm not one of the hair-parted-in-the-middle, bonnet-tied-under-the-chin kind. I've got to have some excitement about my clothes.

(*JENNIE tries to fasten her dress for her. MADELINE jumps.*)

Whew!

LOUISE

It's too tight. (*Starts to loosen it.*)

MADELINE

No, no, don't let it out; it's all right. Go on, Jennie. (*She holds her breath, her hands to her side, squeezing herself in.*) It's all right. Don't make it an inch bigger—it's too loose, if anything. (*She is white and panting with the exertion.*)

LOUISE (*indicating sherry on the table*)

Won't you have a glass of sherry?

MADELINE (*starting to take it*)

No. It might get me started again, and I've cut it out. Jim can't stand for it in a woman. (*Recoiling and admiring herself in a glass. To JENNIE.*)

What do you think of it, Jennie?

JENNIE (*superciliously*)

It ain't so bad!

MADELINE (*shrugging her shoulders at her. To LOUISE*)

Do you think Jim'll like it?

LOUISE (*forgetting herself*)

He's sure to. It's his favorite color.

MADELINE (*surprised*)

Now, how did you know that?

(*JENNIE, who has begun taking off MADELINE's dress, looks at LOUISE sharply.*)

LOUISE (*embarrassed*)

You—you must have told me.

MADELINE

Funny—I can't remember it.

(*The dress is off by this time. JENNIE is assisting her into the one which she wore when she entered.*)

Will I have to try it on again?

LOUISE

Not unless you wish. If there should be any alterations they can be made afterwards.

MADELINE

That suits me, dearie. I suppose you got the seats I sent you for the show, Jennie?

JENNIE

Yes, ma'am.

MADELINE (*enthusiastically*)

Great, isn't it? And that bit of mine. (*To LOUISE.*) You haven't seen it, dearie; it goes like this. (*Imitating her part in the play.*) All right, isn't it, Jennie?

JENNIE (*with the same supercilious air*)

It ain't so bad.

MADELINE (*disgusted*)

Say, you'd make a dandy press agent, you would! (*To LOUISE.*) Get rid of her. (*Pointing to JENNIE.*) I've something to tell you.

LOUISE (*to JENNIE, handing her the dress*)

Take this away, Jennie. Have it finished and sent home tonight.

(*JENNIE goes out sulkily.*)

MADELINE (*as she goes*)

Can't stand that girl. Always makes me think of frost on the windowpanes. Gives me chills down my spine. Come over here, dearie. (*Leading her to the sofa.*) I want to have a talk about me

and Jim. Why, what's the matter? You look as white as death.

LOUISE

It's our busy season, you know, and I'm a little tired.

MADELINE

You poor dear! It's a shame! A girl like you wearing your fingers to the bone for that cat of a Madame Françoise!

LOUISE

I'm glad to have the chance. I don't know what I should do if I lost my place.

MADELINE

Don't you fret about that. You'll keep it all right, as long as I'm willing to let Françoise stick me to the tune of ten thousand a year for clothes. You're sure you're not worrying over that brute of a husband again?

LOUISE

Don't. I've told you it wasn't his fault. If only I'd understood—

MADELINE (*exasperated*)

Well, I can't make you out. When you had him fast and tight you couldn't live with him. You say you'd rather starve than go back to him, but instead of bracing up and getting a little fun out of life, you're moping and fretting yourself to death—over him. Sometimes, when I see what a mess you good women make of things, I'm not so sorry I'm one of the other kind.

LOUISE

I can't bear to hear you speak so. If I'm a good woman, as you call it, today, it's because of you.

MADELINE

Me? That's a joke!

LOUISE

That night, when you found me, I was desperate. I don't dare even to think of what might have happened if you—

MADELINE (*interrupting*)

Funny, wasn't it? Just by chance I caught a glimpse of your face under the street light. I saw the look on it and I knew what it meant. (*Bitterly.*) I'd seen it once before in the glass when I was only sixteen and sat waiting for

old man Black to take me to supper for the first time.

LOUISE

You stopped your carriage and you took me home with you. You fed and clothed me; when I grew stronger, you found me a position here. I can never repay you.

MADELINE

Pay me! Aren't you my friend? Lord, if you knew how good it seems to talk things over with a woman that's not knocking behind your back and trying to queer you with all the men in sight! It's like a breath of fresh air after all night at Rector's. But I haven't told you my news. You'd never guess; Jim's going to get a divorce.

LOUISE (*startled*)

A divorce!

MADELINE

Mn-n. Going out to Reno tomorrow. He'll be back in six months—free, and—there now; don't faint—we're going to be married.

LOUISE

You—married to Jim!

MADELINE

Knew it'd take your breath away. Does seem funny, don't it? Me married! But it's all square and above-board. I've told Jim everything—all about old man Black and young Vandeventer, and (*Softening*) he still wants me. And, oh, dearie, I'm happier than I've been since I was a little bit of a girl up in the country and ma and pa were alive. (*There is a moment's pause LOUISE trying to compose herself, MADELINE thinking of the past and the present.*) Aren't you going to wish me good luck, dearie?

LOUISE (*with an effort*)

I do—wish you good luck.

MADELINE

You don't know what it means to me. I'm twenty-eight, and women like us get old quick. Sometimes this last year, after one of those late suppers, I'd lie awake for hours thinking of the future. I've never flattered myself I could act. If it weren't for my looks and my clothes, I could starve,

for all the engagements I'd get. I tell you, it made me creepy all over. Well, about that time I started in pretty heavy—on the dope and the drink; then three months ago I met Jim. He'd seen the show and taken a fancy to me right off. He got Goldstein to introduce him that same night, and—well, that's all. (*With some embarrassment but very sincerely.*) We'll be married as soon as he's free. I'll have a chance to begin over again—and (*Firmly*) I'll make good. I'm going to run as straight as a die, and, God helping me, Jim will never be sorry. (*Change of manner, laughing, yet affected.*) Good Lord, I'm getting fairly maudlin! (*Then tenderly.*) But wait—wait till you see my Jim; he ought to be here now.

LOUISE (*rising, startled*)

He's coming here?

MADELINE

Half past one—I made him promise last night. You see, dearie, you're the only one of my friends I'm proud to have Jim meet.

LOUISE

I can't meet him; you mustn't ask it.

MADELINE (*surprised*)

Why, what's wrong?

LOUISE

Can't you understand? I can't bear to see your happiness. It calls up too many memories; I can't bear it.

JENNIE (*entering through the curtains at the center. To MADELINE.*)

Mr. Monroe's waiting in the reception room.

MADELINE (*to JENNIE*)

Jim! (*To LOUISE.*) Won't you see him, dearie? He's come on purpose.

LOUISE

I can't—I can't! I hope you'll— you'll be happy, but I can't see him.

(*She goes out at the left.*)

MADELINE (*looking after her*)

Who'd have thought she'd take it like that?

JENNIE (*maliciously, but with apparent innocence*)

I'll bet she wishes she'd hung on to him.

MADELINE (*sharply*)

What's that?

JENNIE (*superciliously*)

Nothing; I—

MADELINE (*interrupting*)

What's she to do with Jim Monroe?

JENNIE

If you don't know, I guess I won't be the one to tell.

(*She starts off at the center.*)

MADELINE (*stopping her and seizing her roughly by the arm.*)

See here!

JENNIE (*whimpering*)

You've torn my waist!

MADELINE (*seeing that JENNIE will speak only if she is bribed. She takes a pin from her throat and gives it to JENNIE*)

Here—pin it up with that. It cost a hundred at Tiffany's. Now, quick, what do you know about her and Jim—Mr. Monroe?

JENNIE

The head fitter found it out. We girls promised not to tell. She's (*pointing in the direction in which LOUISE went off*) Mrs. Monroe.

MADELINE

His wife!

JENNIE (*anxious to tell all, now that she's started.*)

Yes, they used to live out West and she left him. Ain't it a pity—him with all that money and her working?

JIM (*outside*)

Can I see Miss Morris?

MADELINE

Jim! (*She goes to the curtains at the center and calls off in the direction of the voice.*) In here, Jim. (*She comes back, goes to JENNIE and speaks in a rapid whisper.*) See here, you aren't half as stupid as you look. Do what I tell you; don't ball it all up, and I'll settle the bill.

(*She continues to speak in a low voice to JENNIE.*)

JIM (*appearing at the curtains in the center.*)

Thought you'd forgotten me. Can I come in?

MADELINE

Yes, come in, Jim. (*To JENNIE.*) Remember, send her the minute you hear that bell.

JENNIE

All right. (*Looking at the pin as she goes out.*) A hundred at Tiffany's!

JIM (*coming in and looking around*)

Always wanted to see the inside of one of these places. Dressy, isn't it? Reminds me of the Hoffman House bar. (*Picks up the decanter, smells it, puts it down and looks at her keenly.*) Madeline, you didn't forget?

MADELINE

No—I didn't forget.

JIM

Bully for you! Do you realize this is the first time I've seen you today and we're alone? (*He goes up as if to kiss her. She moves aside and he sees for the first time the model figure. Thinking it alive, he backs away, embarrassed.*) I beg your pardon. (*Then, seeing his mistake, he laughs heartily.*) Well, that's one on me, all right. (*He goes to MADELINE, looks at her, sees that she does not smile, takes her hand and they go to the sofa.*) What's the matter, dear? Tired?

MADELINE (*assenting*)

Fitting, I suppose. It's wearing on the strongest of us.

JIM

Well, of course, this clothes business is the one thing that stumps me about a woman.

MADELINE (*interrupting him. Seriously*)

Jim, there's something I want to ask you.

JIM

All right, fire away.

MADELINE

You're sure, quite sure you care for me?

JIM

Oh, if that's all— (*He starts to put his arm around her. She draws away.*)

MADELINE

Enough—enough to marry me?

JIM

I thought we settled that last night. Madeline, you're not going back on me?

MADELINE

It's not that, but, you see, you're the only man that's ever been decent

to me, Jim, and—and I'd like to play fair with you.

JIM

We've had this all out before, Madeline. I don't hold you to blame because life's gone hard with you. You're quite as good or better than the man you're going to marry.

MADELINE

That's different.

JIM

Is it? Well, we won't argue. I know you're a bully good fellow and I'm very fond of you, and that settles it.

MADELINE

You won't regret it, Jim?

JIM

Never. Come, dear, cheer up; it's a wedding, not a funeral we're looking forward to. I'm sick to death of rack-eting around alone and I want somebody to do Europe with.

MADELINE

And afterwards?

JIM

Why "afterwards"? (*He hesitates.*) Well, we'll settle down somewhere and be as happy as two clams.

MADELINE

What about your wife?

JIM (*disagreeably startled*)

My wife?

MADELINE

How—how do you suppose she'll take it?

JIM (*very sternly*)

I prefer not to discuss her.

MADELINE

I guess you think it's rotten bad taste on my part—but, you see, I've got to go into this thing with my eyes open. I've kept nothing back from you—

JIM (*interrupting her rather savagely*)

What do you wish to know?

MADELINE

You—you loved her?

JIM (*after a moment*)

Yes.

MADELINE

And she left you?

JIM

She left me—

MADELINE

Why? *(He does not answer. She goes on eagerly.)* It must have been her fault. *(He is still silent. She goes on, thinking of LOUISE and trying to convince herself that she is speaking the truth.)* I can just see her—a deceitful, designing creature; butter wouldn't melt in her mouth! But underneath it all—oh, no wonder you couldn't live with her!

JIM *(quietly, interrupting)*

As you say, perhaps it's your right to know the truth. So this once—*(He hesitates a moment, then goes on with feeling.)* She wasn't much more than a child when I married her, and she'd the clean, innocent mind of a child. I'd lived like most young fellows with money. Sometimes I was ashamed to look into her eyes—they were so clear and pure. But I loved her—God knows, I meant to make her happy. You wouldn't believe how good I tried to be, Madeline, that year we were engaged. Perhaps I set the mark too high. At any rate, our marriage was a failure from the start. After the first year or two, I took to spending most of my time here in New York. Then there came the scandal about Willard's bachelor supper; the papers were full of it. You may remember—

MADELINE *(drily)*

I ought to. I was there.

JIM

As it happened, I was not. But the reports mentioned my name. When I got home there was a letter—a pitiful, heartbroken letter. My wife was gone. For months I tried to find her, but she'd disappeared as though the earth had swallowed her. That's six years ago.

MADELINE

Suppose she were to come back?

JIM

It's impossible. I've put her out of my life. I've forgotten her. There's one last kindness I can do—to set her free, and then there's an end.

MADELINE

You may be wrong. She must have come up against the world these last six years. Maybe she's lost some of

that innocence and purity you talk about.

JIM *(shocked)*

Madeline!

MADELINE

You needn't look so shocked. *(Bitterly.)* A pretty woman, alone, without money, soon finds out that life's not all prayer meeting and Sunday school. Suppose she did want to come back—suppose she were here now, willing to forgive? Jim—could you—*(She hesitates, then goes on bravely.)* Could you choose between her and me?

JIM *(annoyed)*

You can't expect me to answer you. Why—why, in God's name, open these old wounds?

MADELINE *(with a change of manner)*

You're right; I guess I'm a fool. You haven't seen my friend. I'll ring for her. *(As she goes up to ring, she slips a powder in the sherry glass unnoticed by JIM, speaking at the same time.)* I'm sorry I've upset you, Jim, but, you see, this all means a lot to me. I don't want to start wrong with you.

LOUISE *(entering, surprised)*

Jennie told me you'd gone. *(She sees JIM.)* Jim!

JIM *(astonished)*

My wife!

(LOUISE is overcome. MADELINE, who has been watching her intently, goes to her and supports her, to keep her from falling.)

MADELINE

What is it? You look like you'd seen a ghost. *(She takes up the sherry glass and forces it on LOUISE.)* Here, drink this. *(LOUISE tries to push it away. MADELINE forces her to drink.)* You'll feel better.

LOUISE *(after drinking, standing erect)*

It's nothing. I'm perfectly—*(She staggers and would fall, but for JIM, who catches her in his arms. MADELINE watches them both intently and makes no effort to move.)*

JIM

Louise! She's fainted! No, her face is the color of death. There's some-

thing wrong. (*He lays her tenderly on the sofa, looking down at her.*) I can't leave her. Madeline, go—bring help—quick—quick!

MADELINE (*rather sneeringly*)

Me! Bring help for her!

JIM (*frantically*)

For God's sake, don't stand there, looking like that! Don't you see she's dying? My wife's dying—and you—(*He sees the paper which had contained the powder and which MADELINE had thrown on the floor. He picks it up and looks at it.*) Good God! Poison! You gave it to her!

MADELINE

Yes, I—I gave it. Jim!

JIM (*frantic*)

Why? Why? Because she's my wife—because I love her? You've killed her! You'll pay for it! You—you—devil! (*He springs on her, seizing her by the throat.*)

MADELINE (*wresting herself loose and bursting into hysterical laughter*)

Don't—don't, Jim; she'll be all right soon. I swear it. It's nothing—only some of the stuff I used to take. Look—she's coming to! I didn't think you'd hurt me, Jim!

JIM (*looking down at LOUISE, seeing that she is better and speaking sternly to MADELINE*)

Why have you done this thing?

MADELINE

I wanted to see if it was true that you'd forgotten—that you'd put her out of your life.

JIM

And you played this cheap theatrical trick!

MADELINE (*bitterly*)

Cheap! Yes, that's what I am. Theatrical—well, that's my business, isn't it? At least, I got what I wanted. You love her—you've always loved her. What you gave me was just—well, God knows what! And she—the man she's been eating her heart out for was you.

JIM

What love she had for me died long ago.

MADELINE

Ask her when I am gone.

JIM (*starting toward MADELINE*)

Madeline!

MADELINE (*almost breaking down*)

No—it's no use, Jim—we're done. (*Bracing up.*) Maybe it's just as well. I couldn't have held you. I'd have been all right for knocking about Europe, but some day you'll want a home and your own fireside and children playing beside it, and you'll look for something in your wife's eyes that you can find in hers (*Pointing to LOUISE*) but never, Jim, in mine. No, I'd have been miscast for the part. You'd have let me see it sooner or later, and it'd have been hell for both of us.

(JENNIE, unable to restrain her curiosity, appears at the curtains at the left. MADELINE sees her, and speaks quickly and sharply.)

Well, what do you want?

JENNIE (*innocently but scared*)

Would you like this (*Holding up the lavender dress*) sent home today?

MADELINE (*sharply and rapidly*)

No. Can't bear the color! Keep it yourself; it'll set off your hair.

(JENNIE stares in astonishment)

And get out of here before I change my mind.

(JENNIE disappears quickly)

MADELINE (*with a change of tone to JIM, who stands gazing down at LOUISE, still on the sofa*)

I—I did love you, Jim, in spite of what I've been; I'd like you always to remember that. But I guess it wasn't to be, from the beginning.

LOUISE (*turning and holding out her arms toward JIM*) Jim!

(JIM bends down to her.)

MADELINE

Good-bye, Jim, and good luck! (*Goes out, leaving LOUISE and JIM together.*)

CURTAIN.



THE other woman profits by the mistakes a man's wife makes.

HONOR

By THOMAS L. MASSON

HONOR is a product original in the age of chivalry, and imported to this country by the Puritans. Since then it has been trying to get itself acclimated, with indifferent success.

While extremely rare, it exists in the most unexpected places. Traces of it have even been said to be found in insurance companies.

No profit, it is said, is without some honor. But this has never been definitely settled.

Common, or garden honor, is used by the plain people. It is found in large quantities in the slums. Some thieves are even said to possess it.

As yet, however, it has not been well received in the best society, most social leaders considering it superfluous.

Honor is not always durable; and it frequently happens that the individual receiving it is disappointed in having it suddenly snatched away. This happened to Napoleon Bonaparte and George Dewey, not to mention other more distinguished examples.

Honor has made several attempts to enter American politics, but has never succeeded. It was present at the death of Cæsar, but not at the birth of the Standard Oil Company.



THE CYNICAL OBSERVER

By HILDRIC DAVENPORT

SUBTLE humans are like crabs—who knows whether they are coming or going?

The woman who believes her lover to be unlike other men understands neither the sex nor the man.

Every man seeks his ideal woman, but heaven only knows when he finds her—he never does.

More often by his choice of lies than by truth does a man reveal himself.

Ah, the brief and unctuous self-confidence of those who have not yet been found out!

After-A-While is a luring road leading to Not-At-All.

A BACHELOR PRO TEM.

By AIMÉE GREENE ABBOTT

Monday:

I started Marcia and the children off for the country this morning, and to tell the truth, I felt relieved and glad, for I know they need the change and fresh air. There was a lump in my throat, to be sure, but never for a minute did I consider keeping them home. It is some gratification to feel that there is no man more kind and indulgent to his family than I am.

After a busy day at the office I came home, cleaned up and went out to dinner. Dinner did not taste so good as I expected, probably because I was lonesome, and had no one to talk to. I even noted a couple who were quarreling, and it occurred to me even quarreling would be preferable to sitting alone in gloomy silence. I walked home and had a smoke on the front steps. Finally, I went into the house and thought I would jolly myself along by playing some phonograph records, but I found the machine all swaddled up in a sheet, and gave it up. The parlor chairs looked like ghosts in their linen covers, and a statue between the front windows, in a winding sheet also, seemed to jeer at me—but it was the liveliest company the house afforded.

I went to bed, comforted by the thought of the folks happy in the country.

Tuesday:

I slept well last night and got up feeling like a two-year-old. Finished early at the office, and took a sail down to the Island. Came home on the same boat, and met Jones, who lives on our

street. He had Mrs. Jones, and a guest, a young lady from Chicago, with him, and as Jones and his wife are still spooning, after seven years of married life, they rather shifted Miss Kingsbury onto me. I am rather rusty at playing the gallant, but this young woman is the kind who believes that "if you do not see what you want, ask for it," and she soon had me fetching soda water, picking up her handkerchief and adjusting her wraps, as if I had been acting for her in that capacity for a lifetime. I resented it a trifle at first, but I never was a killjoy, so accepted the situation and its responsibilities. When we reached the dock Jones insisted on going for a bite to eat, so we all piked to a lobster palace and the party did not break up till all hours, and then only with the assurance there would be another party tomorrow night. I wanted to say one party was enough, but as Jones "paid the freight" the first time, the next party was up to me and I could not renege without branding myself as a tightwad. I cannot quite place this Miss Kingsbury. I suppose a woman can be a Fluffy Ruffles without being a fool, and a live wire without being fast, but I do not think Marcia would approve of Miss Kingsbury's dress or her manners.

By the way, I have been too busy to write the folks today. Must send them a box of candy to square myself.

Wednesday:

This was the "day after," sure enough. I make it a rule never to drink anything before lunch, but this morning was hot and muggy, the clerks were stupid, everything went wrong,

and I deliberately went out at eleven o'clock, and treated myself to a high-ball. Then one of our biggest customers blew in, and I had to do the right thing by him. When I left the office at five o'clock I felt satisfied and salubrious, dressed myself with care, and started for the "party," resigned to my fate, whereas last night I regarded the affair as a lamb led to the slaughter.

I could not imagine Miss Kingsbury in a trolley car; her clothes seem to say "Taxicab" with every breath. I secured the taxi, called for the bunch, and we whirled out to Claremont. Marcia and I never go there, for she says it is too gay, and expensive, and she had rather have the money for other things. As we swept up to the entrance I thought of this, and a little stab of regret pricked me, but as I was in it, I must see it through.

I met a man I know and he looked at me in a puzzled way—I hope he does not think for a minute that I am running around with this Kingsbury woman. It seems Mrs. Jones met her when they were at school in Boston, and they belong to some fraternity together, but never were there two women so different in every way.

After supper we took a turn in the Park, and wound up at Rector's, for Miss Kingsbury took Mrs. Jones once to the College Inn, in Chicago, and Mrs. Jones wanted to go her one better.

Coming home we were very gay. When I left the bunch we all swore eternal friendship, but once at home and alone in the rooms where Marcia and I have been so happy, I felt like kicking myself all over the place for being a fool. I could see Marcia in her white dress, under the maples out at the farm, with my children by her side, her thoughts of me—and what of me? What do I do? Buy champagne, with money Marcia's economy has helped me acquire, and buy it for a woman from Chicago, who no doubt wants me for an easy mark, to show her the town without expense to herself. Never—never again. This ends it.

Thursday:

A headache all day. I plunged into work and tried to forget it. Wrote Marcia a long letter—but did not mention how I have spent the evenings; she would not understand. I dined at the club and did not go home till late, for I knew the Jones crowd would be on their stoop, and I could not get past without stopping. I am going to cut out this newly acquired lady friend. A dull evening, but "be good, and you will be lonesome." I wonder what perfume Miss Kingsbury uses? It suggests the minuet—a sandalwood fan.

Friday:

The man who said, "The way to hell is paved with good intentions" knew his business. Who should float into my office this noon but Miss Kingsbury—arrayed in a stunning suit, and a smile that showed no intention of taking no for an answer!

She stated she was "doing" the business end of New York, and had already accomplished Wall Street and several of the old landmarks, but starvation had driven her to me. Would I in mercy convey her somewhere for a cup of coffee? I could have slapped her face at that moment; I wanted to say, "I am a married man, and do not wish to be seen lunching with a woman other than my wife"—but my antics earlier in the week made this impossible, and I gave her a seat and told her I would be with her in a moment. We lunched well—and wisely. Miss Kingsbury refused a cocktail, and carried herself with a dignity and grace lacking when I had met her before. This new and more charming side appealed to me, and the icy manner with which I was protecting myself and trying to be true to Marcia thawed in spite of me.

When Miss Kingsbury suggested resuming her round of sightseeing it was inclination quite as much as politeness which caused me to offer to accompany her. I was surprised to find how many points of interest we found to detain us, and six o'clock found us still together, tired but far from bored. We dined at a *table d'hôte* place and took

a taxi up through the Park. In the cool stretches of the drive a hand stole softly into mine, a form snuggled up close and cozy and I was conscious of nothing but supreme content. I did not want to make love to this woman—not yet—perhaps never, but the sense of companionship, the comfort of sympathy and the human touch at the close of the day were good to have.

I had learned to respect and like this breezy Western girl. What at first seemed boldness was only sincere frankness and perfect crystal truth, without the veneer of our Eastern ways.

I came home happy with the thought of a beautiful day. On the way I stopped at the telegraph office and wired Marcia, not having written and fearing she would be worried.

Saturday:

Half-holiday today and I asked Wilkinson to make up a party and take us out on his yacht. We lunched at the Yacht Club, and sailed at one. Went beyond Scotland Light, dined gorgeously on board—all except Mrs. Jones, who was seasick—and came up by moonlight, the night being the finest I ever saw on land or sea. Miss Kingsbury very naturally fell to my especial care, and the good impression of yesterday was more than confirmed today. The splash of waves—moonlight on the water—the song of the guitar—the elusive, subtle perfume of that girl will

stay with me, in the secret chamber of my soul, till the day I die. It is not the bad women our wives need fear; it is the temptation of lovable, good women, the ones who are worth while—the ones who appeal either consciously or unconsciously to the best there is in us. Why am I left alone and thrown with this girl under conditions which seem to be combining to my eternal undoing?

I must, I will, pull myself together for her sake—for Marcia's and my own. We reached the dock at midnight, and Jones and his wife were effusive in their thanks. I suppose they think I entertain Miss Kingsbury to please them. I wonder if I shall see her tomorrow?

Sunday:

Marcia and the children arrived unexpectedly this morning. The boy has to have a slight operation on his throat. Almost the first thing Marcia said was: "I have been eating my heart out for you every minute, and the thought of you alone in this big empty house made me sick with longing. I could almost have hugged Moses, the hired man—I was so desperate to be petted." And as I gathered her home to my arms I said to myself: "Never again a vacation for one without the other," and in my heart I thanked God she came when she did—for it was just in time.

Then I wondered if Moses, the hired man, was young and handsome.



USUALLY THE CASE

"DID your wealthy old uncle leave many heirlooms?"
"Oh, yes. A new heir looms up almost every week."



NOWADAYS a referee is more in demand than a rector.

LOVE'S LITURGY

By GEORGE VAUX BACON

AS the miser with scooped hand clutches his gold to him, so I draw thee
unto me, Dear Heart;
As the drunkard looks into his cup to dream, I look into thine eyes to
dream;
As a Saint, pressing his lips to the cold marble of the chancel, prostrates himself
in adoration, so I kiss thy brow and eyes and throat, forgetting all beside.
Thy lips are my orisons,
Thine eyes my lights of sanctuary.
I kiss the soft tips of thy fingers;
They are my rosary.
The palms of thy hands are the leaves of my prayer book,
The words of thy lips my ritual,
Thy goodness my creed,
Thy chastity my confusion,
Thy sweetness my benediction.
Thy God is my God;
In thee is God's graciousness made manifest;
Thou art my blessing from Infinity.
The fragrance of pine and balsam, the whisper of the sea, are thy voice.
Thou art slender and fair as the angels of Mary;
Thy hair is a crown of gold.
Like a flame in a vase of alabaster is thy soul in thy body;
Through thee it shines goodness, tenderness, truth.
The firmament, the stars and the constellations are naught to thee, who taught
me love.



KNOWLEDGE

By CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

IN youth I said: "How great a thing is Grief!
How wonderful her eyes!" But now, years after,
I prize beyond all else, like some sad thief,
The golden voice of Laughter!

THE CHOSEN MOMENT

By CONSTANCE CALLAWAY MARSTON

NANETTE answered Somerset's ring.

She smiled with something more than demureness when he asked for Mrs. Mount-Trevor, and gave a very expressive shrug to her exceedingly shapely shoulders. She was well trained, however, and habit being stronger than any emotion, she did her best to hide her indiscretion, and ushered him into the drawing-room with an air that would have done infinite credit to Fifth Avenue and a powdered flunkey.

Somerset was well past the salad stage, and believed in himself with a faith so mighty that neither time nor circumstances had shaken it. And yet he entered the room with an air of diffidence that went far to justify Nanette's opinion that he wasn't sure of his welcome. His sigh was unmistakably one of relief when he found that the room was empty, though, to his surprise, he realized that, in spite of his months of absence, he still felt more at home in Mrs. Mount-Trevor's flat than anywhere else. Even in the woods which he had just deserted, and where he had fancied himself close to nature, he had not experienced such contentment.

He sighed again, but more lightly, as he dropped into the big chair just opposite that dedicated by custom and her own sweet will to Mrs. Mount-Trevor's own use. He stretched out his well-shod feet to the comfortable warmth of the blazing logs, and pushed a gay cushion into that particular spot behind his back where a cushion is apt to do most good.

If a room suggests character, then

Mrs. Mount-Trevor's was an open book. Her domain was filled with those things which betoken a leaning toward the mingled poetry and luxury of the would-be artist. She was a woman who fled for comfort to the tea table as naturally as a man—whether he has an excuse or not—seeks a bracer in a whiskey and soda, or in some more potent concoction. Mrs. Mount-Trevor fancied she was irresistible when taken in conjunction with tea. Indeed, her women friends, of whom she had no less than three, claimed that she was a liberal education for any man, even with the tea left out. Mrs. Mount-Trevor's faith in the cup that cheers was justified, for any man to whom she had extended the privilege of taking tea with her *tête-à-tête* always showed a flattering willingness to repeat the experiment at the earliest possible opportunity.

And Somerset had proved no exception. Indeed, there had been a time when he had growled exceedingly if anybody shared Mrs. Mount-Trevor's time with himself. That, of course, was ages past, quite six months ago, for it was quite as long as that since he had gone away to forget her. Now, recalling their past friendship, Somerset laughed with positive enjoyment, as he noticed the tabouret with its tray drawn close to the fire, and the kettle on the stand by the big easy chair.

His eyes wandered idly about the room until suddenly caught and held by a picture of Grantham. It sneered over at him from the big silver frame, which, when he last saw it, had held a photograph of himself, and, before his

time, had inclosed a forbidding reproduction of the late Mount-Trevor's unlovely countenance. The contents of the frame had been all Mrs. Mount-Trevor's present circle of acquaintances had ever seen of her husband; some accepted on faith, but there were others less charitable, who would have been more satisfied with a death certificate and a marble monument.

Before a closer scrutiny could satisfy Somerset as to whether the present occupant of the silver frame was really Grantham, the door opened and Mrs. Mount-Trevor came into the room. Even as she hesitated for a moment on the threshold, he decided she had changed. Before she had time to speak, he realized that the alteration was more in her dress than in herself, although she had a new and girlish air that gave her all the charm and novelty of a stranger. As she held out her hand to welcome him, he forgot to be critical. "When did you get to town?" she queried presently, when they had exhausted the usual platitudes and were seated comfortably by the fire.

"Only an hour ago. I drove home, changed, and here I am."

"And you have been—where?"

Somerset laughed. The directness of the question was so typical of her. He recovered himself quickly and said, not without a touch of flippancy in his tone: "I have been weeks in the woods, shooting and fishing and playing at being a primitive man. Of a sudden, and for no particular reason, I discovered that my soul was yearning for conventionality—and tea from a Sèvres cup. So here I am back in civilization, in spite of all my resolutions to the contrary." Realizing the awkwardness of what he had said, Somerset broke off suddenly.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor paid no attention to his words; perhaps they had escaped her. "We are flattered that you remember us, New York and I," she said with a smile.

Leaning back in his chair, he watched her busy herself with the teacups. Undoubtedly she was clever; besides, she had lots of good points, and made

the most of them. Her charm still held him, although the breach between them had been of his own making. For months she had filled his life, until, fancying that matrimony threatened him, he had fled without first freeing himself. The long summer spent near the heart of things, the soul of the woods, the lack of the companionship of his kind, had combined to send him back to her. He had returned like the proverbial penny, ready to resume life where he had dropped it. In reality, he flattered himself. Coming into her life when it was empty, he had temporarily served to fill the niche in her heart presumably left vacant by the late Mount-Trevor. And he had filled it as well, perhaps, but certainly no better, than any other man might have done. He had made the common mistake of his sex of confusing propinquity with the master passion, an error that enables many a husband to live out a humdrum existence in peace and propriety.

It was Mrs. Mount-Trevor who first broke silence. Turning the spirit lamp low beneath the kettle, she found time for conversation. "So you've come back to civilization and tea—and is it to be one lump of sugar or two?"

"Thanks, I never take sugar," Somerset said stiffly, conscious of an absurdly aggrieved feeling that she might have remembered. She handed him his cup without offering the apology for her forgetfulness that he felt was his due, and sipped her own meditatively and with evident enjoyment.

Somerset possessed no reserve of small talk, but he made a desperate effort. "You are looking remarkably well," he said at last, after searching in vain for a more brilliant remark.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor blushed prettily. "I have been away, and the trip did me good. We—that is, I—I mean I only got back last night." She paused in evident confusion, and Somerset, noticing it, became interested at once.

"And where did you go for your trip?" he queried. "To Europe for clothes, or to the seaside to show them?"

Mrs. Mount-Trevor refused to be drawn out. "Oh, we just traveled!" she said, with all the airy indefiniteness supposed to be excusable in a woman.

"And the aunt, dear Mrs. Ackerman," he asked—"did she enjoy herself as usual by spoiling your trip?"

Their eyes met, and they both smiled, though Mrs. Mount-Trevor looked a bit disconcerted. This aunt of hers, gray, grim and self-assertive, had stood to them a few months before as the apotheosis of the disagreeable. Even now they could neither of them wholly forgive her for having purposely inflicted her presence and her pug dog upon them at inopportune moments.

"Shall I see her?" Somerset asked.

"Not as soon as your heart may desire. At present she is in the West, quarreling with the relatives of my late uncle. At least, she is stopping with them, and they may, in consequence, be too busy railing at the unkindness of fate to find leisure to grumble openly at Aunt Mary. Besides, she has so much money that their poverty and politeness may constrain them to be discreet."

"Provided they will gossip, they are sure of her affection," laughed Somerset. "But what a cynic you are becoming!" he added as an afterthought.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor was visibly annoyed. "All gossip is not the work of women," she protested indignantly.

Somerset laughed again, and Mrs. Mount-Trevor grew angry. "You men are the worst offenders. The most cruel kind of gossip springs from your clubs and your confidential comparisons of your adventures. We women make fun of each other's gowns or manners; you destroy our reputations. And you do it unjustly, meanly, in an underhand fashion, with a gesture, a word, the uplifting of an eyebrow at an opportune moment."

Somerset shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly, and the action seemed to increase her anger, for she went on vehemently. "You preach everlastingly of your honor, but sometimes I wonder if anything is sacred when you

men foregather in couples with pipes and decanter. How many names do you waft away like thistle down? How many untruths or half-truths do you tell?" As if obeying an uncontrollable impulse, she leaned forward suddenly and looked him straight in the eyes. "Is it vanity," she asked earnestly, "or merely the desire to talk that impels you to it?"

"Why, Clo," he protested, "what's happened? You are growing positively morbid." In the past, oddly enough, they had rather avoided the use of each other's Christian names; and now he used hers awkwardly, as if taking a liberty.

Evidently she had not noticed, for she went on rapidly. "Come, confess; have you kept our friendship free from discussion with others? Are all our little secrets still our own; or have you dragged them out to the light of day for some man to jeer at? Does no one but our two selves know how we spent last June? Have you discussed me and my indiscretions with others, or have you kept faith with me?"

Somerset managed to look sufficiently injured to meet fully the requirements of the position in which she had placed him, then to smile and utter a laughing denial of all such wrongdoing. Yet the consciousness that she didn't quite believe him caused him a vague uneasiness. Suddenly he thought of Grantham, to whom he had confided all his own secrets and many in which he had only a share, and positively shivered.

"Of course it is only a case in point," Mrs. Mount-Trevor went on, more lightly. "But think well; does no one know or suspect that we once thought to spend the rest of our lives together?"

But for his faith in Grantham's integrity—Grantham, whom he himself had introduced to her—he would have been willing to swear that she knew of that night when he had poured out the story of his entanglement and asked for advice, until Grantham, over his third glass, had expressed his curiosity concerning a woman who could so openly make a projectile of herself

to hurl at the head of a good-looking man. Now he realized he had let it go at that, allowing the woman to bear the blame, while he sought safety in pastures new. Knowing Mrs. Mount-Trevor's pride, he had nevertheless let Grantham's opinion of her go unchallenged. Now he would have given much if he had not fed his vanity at the expense of her reputation, for, with a man of Grantham's stamp, that was what it amounted to.

Anxious to change the subject, he caught at any excuse. "Isn't that Grantham's photo?" he asked, apropos of nothing but his own thoughts. "It looks like an uncommonly good likeness," he added, as he crossed the room to examine it more closely.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor stirred the contents of her neglected cup, taking evident interest in the small black leaf sailing persistently on the surface. "Yes," she said, taking the picture from him. "Yes, it is Mr. Grantham. Is he still your very best friend?"

Delighted to have turned the conversation into a safer channel, Somerset launched forth into an extravagant and altogether false eulogy of Grantham, whom he knew to be a *roué* and believed to be unprincipled. He drew a picture, however, half saint, half human being, and this, with praiseworthy imagination, he declared to be his friend.

To his surprise and annoyance, Mrs. Mount-Trevor was more than interested; she seemed actually pleased. She looked up rather quizzically from the pictured face she held to the one bending over her. The two were in absolute contrast. Somerset was big and fair and athletic, the sort of man who would speedily be dubbed a "good chap" in whatever society he found himself. As for the photograph, it distinctly gave the lie to Somerset's description of the original. The face was thin and dark and determined, with square jaw and smileless mouth. It was the face of a man bound to succeed at any cost either to himself or others, and if it could not inspire trust, it did not fail to compel atten-

tion. Somerset studied it closely with a feeling of half-defined jealousy closely allied with wounded pride. He resented Clotilda Mount-Trevor's interest in any other man than himself, though he had done his best to teach her that she was not in the least essential to his happiness.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor was the first to speak. "It is a clever face," she said musingly. There was a note of query in her voice as she added, "And a face one can believe in."

Seeing no other way out of it, Somerset assented.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor still eyed the photo with lingering doubt. "I thought men never gave their friendship where they would not give their confidence; yet you like Mr. Grantham, though you have never trusted him with your private affairs."

Her persistency in returning to the subject he wished tabooed annoyed him. For a moment an uneasy suspicion of Grantham flashed through his mind, but he put it resolutely from him. According to his code, a man might betray a woman but never a friend. The solidarity of the sex once threatened, men would speedily become powerless before the encroachments of the petticoated contingent; besides, Grantham, for all his faults, would never turn talebearer.

Realizing that Mrs. Mount-Trevor remained to be placated, he roused himself with an effort. On the low table at his elbow, and half hidden among a lot of little silver ornaments—the collecting of which was supposed to have been a fad of the late Mount-Trevor's—lay a copy of Omar, the only present she had allowed Somerset to give her. A little ivory marker was slipped between the leaves, and he smiled as he saw it holding its own among her treasures. It was he who had served to introduce her to the Persian poet's verses, and now, though the cult had waned, she still held fast to it. Half regretfully Somerset recalled the day when they had sat in the early sunshine of a summer morning, and he had discovered, as he half

read, half recited the familiar lines, that there was no contrast so charming as a blue ribbon against a firm, white throat.

Softly, half unconsciously, he quoted a stanza. There was a sudden crash as Grantham's photo fell to the floor. Mrs. Mount-Trevor stooped quickly to recover it, but Somerset was before her, and their faces were close together as he half knelt by her chair. The odor of her favorite perfume reached him faintly; her head was half turned and showed the beautiful lines of her neck and the dimple lurking at the corner of her mouth. There was a subtle change in her, a suggestion of reserve that made her all the more charming. Being a man in dangerous proximity to an attractive woman, he did what most men would do, and threw discretion to the winds.

"Clo," he whispered softly, "don't you care for me a little?"

Mrs. Mount-Trevor pulled nervously at the lace on her gown. There were tears in her eyes, but she kept them back with an effort. "Once there was a time," she said tremulously, "when you might have asked that question. That time has long gone by."

"Clo," he protested, but she stopped him at once.

"You forget that a woman is not a plaything to be thrown aside and picked up at pleasure."

"Yet you cared for me once," he insisted, her unwillingness to forgive adding to his determination to win her back at any cost.

"You misjudged me in the old days," she said with evident effort. "It was your friendship I valued, not just your affection. It meant so much to me to have someone who understood, someone who made me forget my loneliness. I had plenty of acquaintances, but none of them cared as much for my happiness as for increasing their own."

"And you never loved me?" His voice was incredulous.

She flushed as she heard the unconscious disbelief expressed by his tone. "What a fool she had been! What

fools all women are to trust to men!" she thought wildly. In a flash, and for the first time, she saw him as he was. She had mistaken for sincerity what was only bluntness. In an absurd, illogical way, she had judged his character by his face, his mind by his manner. She had measured his capacity for truth by her own, and the awakening might have been tragic.

She spoke impulsively, hardly realizing what she said. "Surely there is nothing so fatal as a lack of honesty. I might have grown to care for you had I dared, but now—" She stopped and shook her head.

He saw that she was sincere, and the knowledge annoyed him, for he had thought her wholly his if he chose to speak. Was it possible, he wondered, that he had only grown to value her when she was slipping from him? The idea was absurd, beyond belief. for, by every known standard, it is the man who grows tired and the woman who grows fonder as love recedes.

Mrs. Mount-Trevor seemed to realize his discomfiture and to delight in adding to it. "There was a time," she said musingly, "when you might have done most things with me."

Somerset sighed. For the moment he was really in love; and she was the first well-groomed woman he had seen in months.

"He who will not when he may—" she quoted mockingly. "Well, you know what always happens. One cannot store up affection like dollars, to be drawn upon when convenient. It is a case of take it or leave it, and sometimes it is a question of both."

Somerset fancied himself ill used, but with masculine persistency refused to take her at her word. "I knew women were fickle and changeable," he said, "but somehow I thought you different. I judged you by a higher standard," he added with mournful dignity. "I had faith in you."

It sounded quite tragic, but Mrs. Mount-Trevor only laughed. "I admit nothing; I deny nothing," she said, as she nestled down among the cushions

of her chair and turned her face toward him. "You see, I refuse to be put on the witness stand."

With the deference that had first won her attention and then held it months before, he bent over her hand. His attitude was one of supplication; his voice was full of entreaty. "Clo, I love you," he whispered. "Dearest, will you marry me?"

She laughed again softly, then, checking herself, leaned over the arm of the chair until her head rested against his. She ran her fingers caressingly over his hair, as if she loved its crisp touch, then kissed it lightly.

He tried to take her in his arms, but she rose quickly and eluded him. He found her new shyness an added charm, an improvement even on the rare occasions when she had shown her fondness for him. Before she had a chance to escape, he caught her hand, and drawing her to him, kissed her where the delicate lace half veiled her throat.

For a moment she lay passive in his arms, then resolutely shook herself free and extended her hand. "Good-bye," she said.

Feeling himself on probation, he submitted. "And my answer?" he asked, as he moved toward the door.

She smiled at him with all the old friendliness in her manner. "If you still want it then, you may come for it tomorrow," she replied, as she touched the bell. There was no time to protest, for a moment later Nanette was showing him out.

As he hurried along the avenue he

laughed to himself in the gloom. He realized the consequence of the step he had taken, yet was not sorry. There was a feeling of elation in his mind, a spring to his walk. For the moment he regretted nothing; the time had not come for reflection. He was positive she loved him, in spite of her pretty protestations to the contrary. It was obvious what her answer would be, or she would never have let him go as she did. He felt a half-formed wish that she had been a little harder to win; one tires so quickly of fruit that falls into the hand at a touch. Nevertheless, he was as happy as a schoolboy in the preliminary stages of his first love. He felt like a new man, for he had done his duty and it had not proved disagreeable. Suddenly he thought of Grantham, past pilot of his love affairs and keeper of his conscience, Grantham who sneered at love and held no woman sacred.

Obeying a sudden impulse, he turned into the club in search of his mentor, and failing to find him, settled himself comfortably with a whiskey and soda and a file of a New York paper. He had been out of civilization so long that a newspaper seemed a luxury. Suddenly, as he turned the pages, two names caught his eye. Bewildered, he looked again, then jumped to his feet with an oath, upsetting his glass as he did so.

Before him on the whiskey-stained page was the notice of Mrs. Mount-Trevor's marriage to Grantham. And the date was a month ago.



THE USUAL THING

MRS. RANGLES—I am always outspoken!
MR. RANGLES—And I am generally outtalked.

MORCEAU DE ROI

Par ALBERT JUHELLE

POUR la dixième fois de la soirée, Bruyat repassait devant le Théâtre des Variétés. En troisième vedette, sur les affiches colombier, le même nom hypnotisa son regard: Jane Berteuil.

— Jane Berteuil, murmura-t-il. . . .
Ma femme!

Que lui, passant anonyme du grand boulevard, petit employé de ministère, fût le possesseur légitime de la femme qui triomphait là, tous les soirs, dans l'apothéose des lumières et des applaudissements, cela le plongeait toujours dans la même stupeur, chaque fois qu'il s'arrêtait devant l'affiche du théâtre! Après huit mois de mariage, la situation lui paraissait aussi extraordinaire qu'au premier jour.

— Le mari de Jane Berteuil, moi!
. . . . Moi, un mari d'actrice!

Il se rappelait sa famille de petits bourgeois, aux idées étroites. Jamais, si son père et sa mère eussent vécu, ce mariage ne se serait fait. Jamais ils n'auraient, malgré la simplicité de leurs goûts et la modicité de leur fortune, admis que leur fils épousât une "cabotine." La mère de Jane, même, avait dissuadé sa fille de cette union, rêvant pour elle des partis plus avantageux.

— Ma fille, disait-elle, n'est pas faite pour épouser un petit employé de ministère. . . . Elle peut prétendre aux plus hautes situations, avec sa beauté et son talent. . . . C'est un *morceau de roi*, cette petite!

— Un *morceau de roi*! se répétait souvent Bruyat, lorsque sa femme affichait des goûts de luxe trop dispendieux. Et, pour combler tous les vœux de l'épouse, il souhaitait être roi—roi de la finance, du fer ou du pétrole, au

besoin. Ainsi il eût pu détourner de la gloire des planches l'ambition de Jane, la garder tout entière pour lui. Mais n'étant pas roi, n'étant même pas rentier, il lui fallait subir le partage de sa femme avec le public, cet amant immense et anonyme auquel elle se livrait, tous les soirs, là, derrière les colonnes du petit temple de plaisir parisien. Ah! ce public! C'était lui, le roi, le grand dispensateur d'argent et de renommée. . . .

Et Bruyat en était jaloux, comme d'un rival.

— C'est dégoûtant, le théâtre! fit-il en se détournant de l'affiche.

Une amertume noyait son cœur. Il maudit ce veuvage de tous les soirs, qui le laissait isolé et mélancolique. Si encore il avait la ressource, comme autrefois, à l'Odéon, d'aller l'attendre dans sa loge; mais un mari qui guette sa femme dans les coulisses paraissait aux Variétés un spectacle ridicule pour les camarades de Jane, les habilleuses, les compagnons illégitimes des autres actrices, la concierge du théâtre, qui affectait de ne pas le connaître et l'arrêtait toujours au passage. . . .

A ce moment, les portes battirent dans le péristyle du théâtre, où apparurent des fracs et de claires toilettes. Des spectateurs dévalèrent entre les colonnes du petit temple, se répandirent sur le trottoir. Les cigarettes s'allumèrent.

— Bruyat!

— Clémentin!

Les mains se serrèrent. Le nouveau venu, camarade de collège perdu de vue depuis dix ans, proféra la question inévitable entre deux amis se retrouvant après une longue séparation.

— Qu'est-ce que tu deviens?

Bruyat hésita. Il allait dire: "Je suis marié," mais une pudeur lui vint de dévoiler le nom de sa femme, qui jouait sous un pseudonyme.

— Rien, fit-il. Et toi?

— Moi! Je reviens d'un long voyage au Japon. Aussi je suis content de retrouver le boulevard et les petites femmes. . . . Tu n'es pas marié, toi non plus? . . .

Bruyat croyait impossible de ne pas répondre à cette question directe, mais le camarade ne lui en laissa pas le temps.

— Tu as bien raison de ne pas te presser. . . . Les femmes, vois-tu. . . . A propos, tu as vu la pièce? . . . Il y a là dedans une petite femme exquise et que je m'offrirais volontiers. Mais une actrice des Variétés, ça doit coûter chaud! . . . Tu ne crois pas?

— Tu parles comme si toutes les artistes étaient prêtes à se vendre.

— Oh! mon vieux. Voyons! tu ne vas pas me faire croire que ces femmes-là soient des vertus! . . . Jane Berteuil pas plus que les autres.

— Qui parle de Jane Berteuil?

— Moi! . . . C'est pour elle que j'ai le béguin! . . . Tu trouves que j'ai tort? Tu ne l'as pas vue de près, peut-être! . . .

— Si . . . Non. . . .

— Si tu l'avais vue comme moi!

— Comment l'as-tu vue?

— En corset, dans sa loge. . . . C'est un journaliste de mes amis qui m'avait emmené. . . . Ah! ces journalistes! Il n'a pas dû s'embêter, l'animal, quand elle est venue le remercier de l'article qu'il lui avait troussé!

— Tu crois encore que les artistes vont remercier tous les journalistes qui écrivent sur elles? . . . Et quand même! . . . Crois-tu que. . . . C'est étonnant tout de même ces légendes qui circulent chez les gens ignorants des choses du théâtre!

— Pardon, mon cher, je connais fort bien les choses du théâtre. . . . D'ailleurs, qui ne sait comment s'obtient la protection des critiques? . . . C'est comme les engagements. . . . Crois-tu que les directeurs de théâtre? . . .

— Oh! encore une autre légende! . . . Mais c'est idiot, idiot! . . .

La voix de Bruyat s'était levée peu à peu; il criait maintenant, le visage empourpré. Des spectateurs qui fumaient leur cigarette sur le trottoir se retournèrent.

— Tu n'as pas besoin de te mettre en colère! . . . Je ne vois pas en quoi ça peut te toucher.

Un petit froid tomba. Les deux camarades hésitaient à rompre sur ce ton acrimonieux et cherchaient un autre sujet de conversation.

Leur regard, tourné vers la chaussée, fut attiré par l'arrivée d'une lourde auto, aux phares aveuglants, qui vint se ranger au trottoir. Un géant blond, à la barbe carrée, en descendit. Le pardessus ouvert sur le plastron, où scintillaient de gros diamants, la soie du chapeau miroitante, il traversa l'asphalte en boitillant légèrement, monta le perron du théâtre.

— Tu connais? dit Clémentin.

Bruyat fit un signe de tête affirmatif, bien qu'il fût incapable de mettre un nom sur le personnage.

— Tu sais sa dernière conquête?

Bruyat hocha encore la tête, l'esprit ailleurs.

— Ah! elle en a une veine, cette petite Berteuil! . . .

— Berteuil! . . . Jane Berteuil!

— Tu me disais que tu savais. . . . Comment, tu ne savais pas que Jane Berteuil. . . . Mais d'où sors-tu donc, mon petit? Mais tout Paris sait ça. . . . Ils vont tous les soirs à Armenonville après le théâtre. . . .

La sonnerie de l'entr'acte interrompit les causeurs. Clémentin prit congé rapidement. Les spectateurs jetaient les cigarettes, que ramassèrent les camelots en attente, s'engouffraient sous le péristyle des Variétés.

Immobile, Bruyat sentait le trottoir chavirer sous lui. Les lumières, les gens dansaient devant ses yeux éblouis. Puis, il se rassaisit.

— Imbécile! jeta-t-il à l'adresse du camarade.

Ce n'était pas la première fois qu'un pareil "canard" lui volait aux oreilles! La gazette scandaleuse de Paris n'est-

elle pas toujours prête à inventer une nouvelle calomnie sur une femme en vedette? On ne connaissait à Jane aucune liaison illégitime; il fallait bien qu'on inventât!

— C'est épouvantable, pensait Bruyat, de la voir ainsi la proie de la curiosité publique! . . . Mais, au fait, quel est donc cet homme qui passe pour son amant?

Il chercha des yeux l'auto qui avait amené le personnage désigné, songea à interroger le chauffeur. Mais il n'osa.

— C'est tellement absurde, d'ailleurs, ce potin! Pourquoi me tromperait-elle?

Il remontait le boulevard vers la place de la République, cherchant un peu de solitude. Et une voix l'arrêta, une voix qui criait au fond de lui-même, avec le timbre de Clémentin:

— Et pourquoi ne te tromperait-elle pas? Parce qu'elle t'aime? Elle t'a aimé, certes, au début, puisqu'elle t'a épousé malgré sa mère et contre son intérêt. Mais maintenant? Elle n'a plus le temps d'aimer, de t'aimer, tout accaparée par le théâtre. Et puis, dans l'adultère, il n'y a pas qu'une question d'amour, aujourd'hui surtout, avec ce besoin de luxe qu'ont les femmes, ce besoin de protection qu'ont les actrices. . . . Aujourd'hui, la femme se donne par utilité plus que par amour. . . . L'argent, l'argent a tué l'amour.

Il se souvenait de la gêne récente où les avait plongés la prodigalité de Jane et qu'avait chassée à temps l'engagement rémunérateur des Variétés.

Au fait, combien gagne-t-elle exactement? Il n'a jamais vu cet engagement; elle a refusé toujours de le montrer, prétendant vouloir régler elle-même ses affaires. . . . Pourquoi s'est-elle cachée de lui ainsi? L'argent qu'elle apporte au ménage vient-il bien de la caisse du théâtre? Et cet engagement même, comment l'a-t-elle obtenu? Au prix de quel sacrifice? Ne doit-elle rien à la protection

d'un critique, d'un gros commanditaire? Le géant blond, à l'auto, n'est-il pas un gros commanditaire du théâtre? . . .

Toutes ces questions qu'il n'avait jamais osé se poser jusque-là se dressaient devant lui, suscitées par la délation de Clémentin.

A une heure du matin, il se retrouva assis sur un banc devant le passage des Princes, guettant l'auto, aux phares étincelants, qui stationnait au trottoir. Les passants s'étaient raréfiés ainsi que les voitures, qui emportaient, rapides, les derniers spectateurs des théâtres. Un homme, de mine étrange, étant venu s'asseoir à côté de lui sur le banc et le dévisageant avec insistance, il se leva, agacé, et se mit à marcher.

Soudain, comme il se retournait, il aperçut le géant blond, debout près de la portière ouverte de l'auto; et aussitôt une femme emmitouflée traversait le trottoir en courant, s'engouffrait dans la voiture.

Bruyat s'élança: il venait de reconnaître sa femme.

Il joignit l'auto, au moment où elle démarrait dans un bruit de ferraille, sauta sur le marchepied, dans une ivresse de meurtre. Mais la poignée de cuivre qu'il avait saisie fit ouvrir la portière; il perdit l'équilibre, roula sur le pavé de bois, tandis que la voiture s'enfuyait.

Comme il se relevait, des poings s'abattirent sur lui, le rejetèrent sur le sol. Des talons de botte le meurtrirent. Il vit, penché sur lui, l'homme qui le dévisageait tout à l'heure sur le banc et qui maintenant l'injurait en russe.

Pantelant, le visage inondé de sang, il distingua la rumeur d'un attroupelement, perçut confusément des voix:

— Encore un nihiliste!

— Un attentat contre le grand-duc!

— Lynchez-le. . . .

Un coup de matraque sonna sur son crâne, le plongea dans la nuit trouble du coma.



A SPRING LILT

By HERMAN DA COSTA

THERE'S a ripple on the river, where the water is a gleam;
There's a brown bird singing to its shadow in the stream;
And the barren woods are blooming, and its people are a-wing,
For over hill and over dale they hear the coming spring!

Here's a snow of buds ablow in the apple tree;
Overhead a sunny wind, blowing to the sea.
Who will come a-roaming? Come with me today.
And, oh, the yearning faces on the broad highway!

There's a ruffle on the water and a drowsy cloud above;
There's a blue sky spilling out a shower for its love.
For sweet April is a-weeping and is laughing as she cries,
And she gathers up a rainbow end and dries her pretty eyes.

Here's the way to Yesterday; take it, an you will.
April's but a bit ahead, dancing on the hill.
Who would woo the madcap? Hurry, while you may!
And, oh, the feet that wander from the broad highway!



A MERRY GOLF WIDOW

TIME: Saturday, 2.25 P.M.

Mrs. T. Mashie at the window looking out wistfully into the June sunshine.

Mr. T. Mashie appears, every detail of his costume suggesting a longing for the links. His cap is in his hand and his clubs within snatching distance. For the fraction of an instant he leans nonchalantly against the doorway.

"Well, my dear," he asks, "how shall we spend our half-holiday? Shall we motor or drive or walk? Because," rapidly, as Mrs. T. Mashie is about to speak, "if you really don't care about any of these things, I have an engagement to play golf at half past two and—by Jove, I must be off at once!"



THOUGH a moth is very fond of dress, it is not at all particular as to style.

THE EPILEPSY OF THE ORCHESTRA CHAIRS

By GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

IF things keep going on this way in our theaters, they'll soon have to substitute smelling salts for chocolates and small flasks of whiskey for opera glasses in the coin-in-the-slot boxes on the backs of the chairs. The caramel days of the drama are no more.

There was a time when one could go to the theater reasonably certain that he would suffer no further physical strain than an occasional lump in the throat or a hearty laugh. Today one is lucky if he can pull through an evening of drama without throwing a fit. In fact, at five of the more recent *premières*, the auditorium of the playhouses looked for all the world like a busy day in the psychopathic ward of Bellevue Hospital. The spinal column has supplanted the hands as the organ of applause. Only out-of-town people clap nowadays. Your truly bred New Yorker, if he approves of what is transpiring on the stage, either becomes completely epileptic or indulges himself in a maneuver that begins with an ear splitting shriek and concludes with a cross between a paroxysmal attack of ptyalism and a plain hoochee-coochee.

Scenting the tendency of the drama to breed an increasingly aggravated hysteria in its auditors, the managers have given further impetus to the audiences' convulsions and kindred species of physical fireworks by eliminating the old time vulgar claque on opening nights and distributing instead, here and there in the auditorium, ladies and gentlemen who, when the "big scene" comes, suddenly proceed to grow pale, suffer their limbs to stiffen in frozen

horror, and fall out of their chairs into the aisles. Ushers are then rushed down to revive the victims with ice water; a man stationed in the eighth row is paid two dollars to emit the usual shout about "giving 'em fresh air"; someone inquires from the stage whether there is a doctor in the house; several legitimate persons in the audience by this time faint out of sympathy—and the play is launched to success. Any man or woman who can become realistically epileptic at will can command as high as fifty dollars for his or her services at the current openings.

The extreme to which this state of affairs has progressed may be shown best by a faithful chronicle of what has occurred at some of the different theaters in the last few months. Although I will not vouch for the basic authenticity of the emotions indicated, the fact that they were displayed stands unchallenged. At the first performance of "The City" in the Lyric Theater, following the rasping climax of the second act two women fainted outright, a third toppled over in her chair, a large box party, unable to endure the tension, left the theater, and several men in the gallery shouted out "My God!" in their excitement. On the second night of the same play two women keeled over, while a man seated in the twelfth row shrieked at the top of his voice when the morphine fiend shot his sister. At the *première* of "The Lily," in the Stuyvesant Theater, the scene presented following the *dénouement* of the drama bordered on a

riot. Women yelled themselves into a state of hysterical collapse and several had to be led into the outer corridor for a breath of resuscitative air. During the trial scene in "Madame X" on the first night in the New Amsterdam Theater, dozens of women broke down under the stress of their emotions, and on the second night a woman was led from the auditorium in a state of epileptic frenzy. At the first matinee five women left the theater sobbing violently while the scene was going on and one man, gray-haired and bent, gave noisy vent to his grief.

During a performance of "The Fires of Fate" a man in the audience realized suddenly that he, like the leading character in the play, was afflicted with sclerosis of the spine, and was so affected that he was thrown into convulsions. A physician had to be summoned to revive him. The tension in the last act of "Alias Jimmy Valentine" at Wallack's recently caused a young woman to collapse and fall out of her seat while, in quite another way, the management of "The Lottery Man," at the Bijou, has advertised the fact widely that "the orchestra chairs are wrenched from their fastenings at every performance." During the presentations of "The Nigger," at the New Theater, it has been no uncommon sight to see the cheeks of women go white during the lynching episode and to hear both masculine and feminine gasps at the kiss assault incident in the second act. In short, there is small place in New York today for a drama that cannot give an audience the delirium tremens. Thespis has taken up his home in Dramatteawan.

TURNING now from the audiences to the plays, little remains to be said of "ALIAS JIMMY VALENTINE" save to echo the opinion expressed on every side that if a speculator demands five dollars for a single seat you may give him what he asks without a murmur of protest. You will get your money's worth. With the possible exception of "The Fortune Hunter," I know of no other play this season that has been

endorsed so unanimously and deservedly. "ALIAS JIMMY VALENTINE" is a dramatization by Paul Armstrong of a short story by the well known last paragraph joker, O. Henry. It is a thief-detective play punctuated by love—the first role being played with exquisite finesse by H. B. Warner, the second with ingratiating assurance by Frank Monroe, and the part of the petticoated hyphen with an art that does not call for quotation marks by Miss Laurette Taylor. The latter's method is so distinctly refreshing and exhilarating in this day of starring young women, whose chief histrionic assets are heads of curly red hair, that it seems a pity the public will not stick a pin in itself and wake up to the fact that it is spending quite a number of good dollars each year to watch the amateurish antics of several endorsers of Pinaud's toilet preparations under the delusion that it is watching "stars."

IMAGINE Miss Maxine Elliott being starred in a play called "THE INFERIOR SEX"! Just stop and think—Maxine Elliott! She of the icicle pulchritude, of the statuesque splendor of Athene, of the wond'rous midnight hair! Why, most persons could as easily picture the Elinore Sisters in a play called "The American Beauties." Although never having indulged in the general clamor to proclaim Miss Elliott's physical charms—probably due to affiliation with that other group of masculinity that is more partial to the squab species—I must confess to having been startled by the incongruity myself. When I saw the play, however, I realized at once what it all meant. "THE INFERIOR SEX" did not refer to women as a class, at all. Frank Stayton, the playwright, may have intended that it should—in a way—but, as a matter of fact, any chronic theatergoer could see in a flash that it was meant to describe only the female element who do not care to go in bathing for two reasons and a flat chest—or, more modestly speaking, only to those women who must rely on dressmakers for magnetism. That Miss Elliott distinctly was

not a member of this inferior sex was made apparent with a bang when, at the very start of the play, she was lifted aboard the yacht *Firefly* in a salt water soaked white flannel affair that was miles removed from the "creations" in which she heretofore has starred. In the second act, the fact that clothes do not make Maxine Elliott was emphasized again when she appeared in the same white flannel affair—dry by this time—and, if doubt perchance lingered, the fact was italicized in the third act, when the actress still clung to the dresslet that had clung to her in the first act. Again close your eyes and try to imagine the radiant Maxine going through three acts in a single sartorial something that did not cost several thousand dollars! If the picture is difficult of conjuration, the explanation is less so. Maxine Elliott, cloak model, is no more. It is now Maxine Elliott, actress! In the best play in which she has appeared in recent years, the dramatic capabilities of the sister-in-law of the finest actor on the English speaking stage have found themselves.

My friend, the Chronic Faultfinder, insists that he knows of no playwright for whom he has a greater admiration than Somerset Maugham. "Any man who has the nerve to write a play like 'Mrs. Dor'—and get away with it," says he, "commands admiration." I hesitate at taking sides in the matter further than to say I agree with my friend. "Mrs. Dor," the latest *hors d'œuvre* from the hand of the English conversational chef, is two hours of mayonnaise served on a thin lemon wafer. Personally, I need a biscuit. When I go to the theater, curiously enough, I am amusement hungry. Miss Billie Burke, a volatile young woman whom any number of pretty boarding school girls regard as a very fine actress, essays the principal part in the play. Miss Burke's gowns render her lines splendidly.

WESTWARD the star of the Empire makes its way. It should be a long

while, however, before Miss Ethel Barrymore, the present star of the Empire, has to leave that theater for the provinces of the setting sun. In "MID-CHANNEL," the most recent work of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, she has registered the greatest artistic triumph of her career, has raised herself to a proud position among the very leaders among our native players, and has impressed the tens of thousands of faithful kneelers at the shrine of the glorious quiver in her voice that her "personality" of yesterday has been thrown into the shadow by her undeniable art—dramatic art—of today. The soft velvet, willowy Ethel Barrymore, the Ethel Barrymore for whom college boys yelled and photographers yearned and a nation of masculine hearts felt lovesick—the "what is home without a picture of Ethel" Barrymore—has left the stage forever. And in the place of this girl, this girl whose "Cousin Kate" and "Captain Jinks" and "Sunday" gave Youth a new ideal to live for, to work for and to love, though abstractly, in the place of this girl there has come a new Ethel Barrymore—Ethel Barrymore, the woman. That funny little tremble in her voice is gone. That half-awkward, entirely delightful little walk is gone, too. And so, also, is that wonderful rippling laugh with a tear in it. Their place has been taken by a quiet dignity, a subtle repose, an intrinsically more elaborate technique. If we are the loser, we are still the gainer.

"MID-CHANNEL" has been criticized for its olivader tone. It has been urged that Pinero has wrought in too dull, too unpleasant colors. But then Pinero almost always does scorn the gay shades in his themes. His dramas run to the colors of dying autumn. In "MID-CHANNEL" he has painted a picture in grays and blacks, with a lingering touch of turning scarlet. For fourteen years Zoe Blundell and her husband have been tossing restlessly on the uneasy waves of wedlock. Unable to endure the matrimonial *mal de mer* longer, Zoe dashes off to Italy, while her husband dashes round the

corner to a furnished flat and what usually goes with it when it becomes a factor in social economy. While Blundell is living with this woman, a sort of financial vampire, Mrs. Zoe does not confine her sightseeing in Italy to blue lakes and Doges' palaces and cathedrals. Rather does she, when in Rome and elsewhere, do as the Parisians do, the other name on the register of the hotels where she stops being that of a young man named Ferris. After things have been going on in this fashion with the Blundells for some time, a friend of the family persuades them that they are wasting their lives and that their only happiness rests in reconciliation. In a magnificently written scene the husband and wife are brought together. He admits the life he has been leading. She resorts to subterfuge. He insists upon the truth. Like "Rebellious Susan," she tells him he must take her, if at all, just as she is. But slowly he worms the story from her and, hearing it, cries out he will have no more of her and that her young lover must marry her. Zoe rushes to Ferris's rooms, apprises him of what has happened, learns from him that he has become engaged to a young woman to whom she knows he has been attentive, and has no sooner been hurried into an adjoining room than her husband bursts in upon the scene. There is a tense pause—then a battery of staccato argument ending in Ferris's cry: "Very well; I'll marry Zoe if she wants me to. We'll leave it to her." He steps to the door, opens it and calls, first softly, then louder, then louder still. There is no answer. Another moment of silence and a servant rushes into the room. "Yes?" shout the men. The servant hesitates. "What has happened?" cries Ferris in alarm. "Go on—speak!" The servant looks up. "There has been an accident, sir," he replies quietly. Zoe has hurled herself to death from the high balcony overlooking the street. And the curtain falls. Not pleasant, to be sure, but unrelenting, faithful, unerring in its dramatic psychology to the very end. "MID-CHANNEL," gloomy as it

is, is a thousand times more enjoyable than a lot of the futile piffle that is made to masquerade on our stage as drama.

The basic idea of Pinero's play is much the same as that employed by the late Clyde Fitch in "A Happy Marriage." Fitch treated of a couple that stumbled at what he termed the "first hurdle" of married life. The English dramatist's couple are wrecked on what he terms the shoal in the middle of the matrimonial channel. The company supporting Miss Barrymore is, in the main, efficient, Eric Maturin, in the role of young Ferris, being particularly so. H. Reeves Smith gives a delicately molded characterization of the friend of the Blundells, and Miss Louise Rutter, besides looking pretty as Ferris's fiancée, pronounces it "Februaryary."

IF Miss Cora Maynard's drama, "THE WATCHER," had met with any great success, a most dangerous precedent would have been set for playwrights. Miss Maynard took for her theme the watch kept by the spirit of a departed mother over the lives of her living children. One of these children was a young man who had unwittingly married the former mistress of the man who was now seeking marriage with his sister. The son was a gambler, drunkard and cheat. His sister was antithetically virtuous. The playwright took these four characters—the two children, the ex-mistress and the latter's masculine latchkey—and gradually worked them against one another up through three acts to what promised to be a truly dramatic *dénouement*. Then, just as the emotional quadrangle reached its apogee, with the ex-mistress arrayed in jealousy against the daughter and the latter's lover, with the daughter at battle's point with the man who loved her, and with the son pressing a suicidal revolver to his temple, the spirit of "mother" began to work. The daughter, casting drama from her, took three short steps forward, held out her arms in the direction of the lobby and, with fixed eyes

and holy tone, murmured the name of her dear departed parent. The son, suddenly throwing the pistol on the floor, took one long step to the right, and, assuming a like attitude, also indicated that the spirit influence of "mother" had shown him the error of his intended action. The climax went to pot; the drama stopped; the curtain fell. Mother, mother, mother had pinned a rose on it. Miss Maynard had sacrificed a good play to an "idea."

And so I reiterate that if "THE WATCHER" had succeeded, vast injury might have resulted to the drama. Playwrights, after involving their characters in intricate dramatic tangles, might have been persuaded to unravel their problems so satisfactorily and so very, very simply by merely having those characters suddenly feel the spirit influence of a parent, a relative or a beloved friend who had gone to that bourne whence. Imagine the plethora of plays whose mix-up of plot might be explained away with a sudden spiritual cry of "Father!" or "Uncle!" just before the final curtain! A Eugene Walter might quickly bring his John Madison to the footlights in the last act of an "Easiest Way" with a heavenly sigh of "Brother-in-law!" and cause him, through the intervention of the dead, to marry a Laura Murdock, anyway. A Pinero might give a happy ending to an "Iris" by having his Maldonado feel a fourth act effect of a deceased sister. An adapting Belasco might cause his Comte de Maigny to be affected by the spirit of a dear old fellow rounder and to tell his erring daughter Christiane that she was forgiven. It all would have been so easy. Anybody could write a good play then. Spirits would take the place of logic and dramatic critics would have to go out of business.

Returning specifically to "THE WATCHER," it may be chronicled that John Emerson's portrayal of the disolute son was vivid and much appreciated, that Thurlow Bergen, as the suitor, was obtrusively "manly," and that Miss Percy Haswell, as the daughter, was pale but uninteresting.

"TWELFTH NIGHT" was the New Theater's second Shakespearian presentation. I do not care for "TWELFTH NIGHT." I never did care for "TWELFTH NIGHT." During my courses in Shakespearian literature at the university, there was always one period in the semesters when the classroom seat usually occupied by your present humble servant would be filled with nothing more eager for education than the hat of the fellow in the next chair. That was when "TWELFTH NIGHT" was in the process of analytical reading. "TWELFTH NIGHT" is weak stuff, according to my poor way of thinking—vulgar, anonymous, drab, empty. The estimable Coleridge would have set himself a difficult task in deifying the Immortal Bard had this one play been a work on which the latter's reputation must have rested. What do *you* think of the drunken flapdoodle that goes for anything above Murray Hill burlesque in the cellar of Olivia's house? What do *you* think of the palæoselachian comedy incidental to Malvolio's finding of the letter in the garden? And what do *you* think of the whole affair, the play as a comedy, as literature or what you choose? Be honest! Forget professional teaching or what your learned, your very learned neighbor has told you. Study "TWELFTH NIGHT" for yourself; compare it with any other single work of the world's greatest playwright, and then tell me honestly if you, too, do not think it is chop suey hiding behind an apparently unsnatchable classic mask—a mask tied securely by the tradition hand of time! Think it over.

The New Theater's production was splendid and gave every evidence of careful thought in preparation. But, then, after all, it is the play that counts—or doesn't.

OF "THE WITCH," the subsequent production at the New Theater, better things may be written. An adaptation of a play by H. Wiers-Jenssen and characterized as a drama of Salem witchcraft, the presentation possessed a quality of merit that amply justified

its choice for a stage with a purpose. Like another drama of which notice has been made, "THE WITCH" was criticized roundly for its prevalent gloom. Brightness, however, in a drama of this kind would be as unnatural as sunlight at night. Darkness is as inseparable from certain species of dramatic themes as it is from the cycle of time. And not everybody regards with sorrow the twilight in either the day or the theatric thesis. Very often dramatic gloom, like *la nuit, porte conseil*. A drama of Salem witchcraft on the face of it, be it good or bad, could not very well contain much rollicking comedy. Gloom, if logically essential, is not a bad sort of thing. Without it, "Macbeth" and "Hamlet," "Resurrection" and "The Bells," "Ghosts" and "The Weavers" never could have been written.

The story of "THE WITCH" concerns Goodwife Joan Hathorne (Bertha Kalich), who loves her husband none the less, but loves his son the more. She loves her husband in a holy way, and his son (by a former marriage) in the same way minus the Seventh Commandment. Joan comes to know that her mother was believed to be possessed of certain of the powers of witchcraft. The knowledge works on her until she, too, believes she has inherited some of the tricks. One of the latter is the power to summon persons to her at her will. Determined to learn for herself whether she has control of this devil force, she thinks hard about her husband's son, and, sure enough, he is soon on the scene with her in his arms. Inasmuch as it is late at night, and inasmuch as Joan is very pretty and willing, and inasmuch as Master Hathorne had been doing this same thing on previous nights, it seemed to the audience to be much less a matter of witchcraft than one of habit. However, in a subsequent scene with her husband, Joan, in a fit of rage, wishes him dead, and undermined by the shock of the confession of her hatred of him, he falls at her feet. She is made to believe that she brought about his death by willing it, and in the presence of the

people of Salem breaks down and admits that she is a witch. As may be inferred from this sketch of the story, lightly painted though it is, "THE WITCH" is not the medium for a gay evening. Nevertheless, for those who are not averse once in a while to the form of drama in which thought supplants legs and Dear Old Broadway, it is entirely worth while.

"NONE SO BLIND" is another play in which the emotional trestle work of a bridge builder is taken apart and then put together again. Rupert Hughes showed us a bridge builder's cardiac blueprints first; Alfred Sutro showed us the same thing next; and now Ernest Poole has tried his hand at it. Mr. Poole is unfortunate in having chosen blindness as his hero's appeal for sympathy. Blindness, though sad, is an extremely ugly subject, not less so in the theater than when presented on the street corner to the tune of a beggar's accordion. Being the most terrible affliction in the world of mortals, it repels while it commands commiseration. In handling the subject, the pen of the ablest dramatist screeches like a nail against a slate. That blindness was feigned by John Howe in Mr. Poole's play does not mitigate the case. The fine art of John Mason, who portrayed the role, made it all seem so real, so magnificently horrible, that the effect was the same.

"You can't stir up any man's life—you're lucky if it looks all right on top," remarks one of the women characters to another in "A MAN'S WORLD." Whereat all the gay dogs and other good husbands in the audience smile self-satisfied smiles that seem to say: "Right you are; we are all devils." And when they get home their wives make them run right downstairs and shake up the furnace. Or if they are not married, the girls with them lorelei them into big restaurant checks and then, after getting rid of them subsequently at the front door, yawn, stretch out their fair arms and confess to themselves they have been bored to

death. There is one thing about which you may be sure: A man is only a devil when the woman is more of one.

"A MAN'S WORLD," however, is very good drama, a bit contradictable in spots but always interesting. It is from the pen of Rachel Crothers, and is the best woman-done play of the season. I am sufficiently unchivalrous to dare the opinion that women cannot write plays—serious plays—that will hold water. I am happy to say that "A MAN'S WORLD" is one of the rare few that some day may cause me to change my mind. In spite of sporadic suspicions of *oligochæta* in its psychology, it moves evenly, vividly to within a moment of the end. The theme that the playwright has exploited is best expressed in one of her own lines: "This is a man's world. Man sets the standard for woman. He knows she's better than he is and he demands that she be—and if she isn't she's got to suffer for it. That's the whole business in a nutshell."

Frank Ware (Mary Mannering) is the pen name taken by a woman whose life is wrapped up in novel writing and a child she has adopted. She lives in a boarding house in Washington Square, tenanted by artists, writers, actresses—in short, by that class of everyday human beings to whom some fool once tacked the name "Bohemians." Mrs. Grundy is the star boarder. She insinuates at first that the child is the woman's own, and then that its father is Malcolm Gaskell, who is a frequent visitor at the novelist's rooms. Rather than divulge the fact that the child was born out of wedlock and that she adopted it when its mother died, the woman invites suspicion and shoulders it when it comes. Gaskell, who loves her, implores her to tell him the truth. In telling him what he asks, she learns that *he* is the father of the boy, that he is the man who sent the youngster's mother to ruin and the grave. "But I never promised her I'd marry her," he tells her. "And you don't think you did wrong?" she cries. "No," he replies abruptly. He steps to her and

tries to take her in his arms. "I love you," he tells her. "Marry me. What I did to that girl shouldn't matter." She shrinks from him. There is a nervous moment. She clenches her fists, holds tight to her ideals and sends Gaskell from the room. The curtain falls; the play ends. You see, it is a woman's world, after all. Love makes the world go round, and woman, czarina of love, makes it halt on its axis when she wills. The ending of the play testified against the theme the play sought to exploit. I abhor endings that are happy in name only, but in the case in point I insist a logical Miss Crothers should have made Gaskell compel his sweetheart to marry him—beat her into it if need be. But no matter what disagreeing opinions one may hold, the fact remains that this drama is a very successful effort. And Miss Mannering, Charles Richman and the rest of the company presenting it pleased even my faultfinding friend. Which is saying a great deal.

"MADAME X," Bisson's champion-of-the-world tear melodrama, has scored such a huge success that anyone who at this late hour attempts to praise it further must surely be in the way. It is built for the sole purpose of making people cry, and it accomplishes its purpose more lachrymosely than any sister play of recent years. The prologue causes the audience to feel and see whether its handkerchief is there. The first act makes the men start to read their programs with a suspicious diligence, and causes the women to begin sniffing. In the second act the men begin to cough just as if they had very bad colds, and the women begin to feel that their noses are getting red. In the fourth act the men try to find something they believe they have dropped under the seat, and the women *know* there is not a speck of powder left on their faces. It is a grand old cry. In fact, so broadcast has the story of "MADAME X's" tearfulness been spread that the audiences begin to cry before the play begins.

"THE HEIGHTS" was another one of those dramas that suffered from enlargement of the symbolism. Had William McGuire, the author, removed the Ibsen from its appendix, he might have bettered its condition. The theme of the play bore an underlying similarity to that of "A Man's World," save that in the present case the woman in the end sacrificed her ideals for a husband. Georgia Warren loved Richard Sidney. Georgia, however, was a peculiar being, who imagined Cupid as a spiritual being without a physical body. Accordingly, when Sidney "disappointed" her, Georgia, who was distinctly "not that kind of a girl," fled from England to the Alps in search of a pure man, a man who would meet her ideals. It was a significant fact that she did not stop, nay, even hesitate, in France! On the heights she came to find that men were as low as they were in the valleys, and that Plato, after all, was only the Elbert Hubbard of his day. And so, making up her mind that a man's a man for a' that and that love is therapeutic in the case of nicked ideals, she decided that Cupid was not the ethereal dream boy she thought he was, and went back to London in Sidney's arms. Frank Keenan, as the human Alpine male, Miss Kershaw, as the searcher for a virtuous man, and Miss Hilda Keenan, as a chorus girl whose experience with men, as she put it, was "good night, good morning, good-bye," were quite up to their dichromatic roles.

WITH "The Easiest Way" and "Paid in Full" still fresh in the metropolitan memory, Eugene Walter faced an audience doubly critical when he drew back the curtains of "JUST A WIFE." It would not do merely to *please*; it was up to Mr. Walter to *electrify*. The man who constructed the drama in which Miss Frances Starr is playing had set himself a standard that oxygenized genius alone could surpass. Mr. Walter did not fail. But he did not come up to expectations. His latest effort, however, possesses interest and many sug-

gestions of the cool dew of the fresh Walter touch. The one ridiculously incongruous element in the drama is the introduction of a vulgar, grinning young Jew into a stratum of society that, this side of the footlights, undoubtedly would railroad him at express speed back to Hester Street. The production is staged with the usual Belasco precision.

"WHERE THERE'S A WILL" is the naughty kind of French farce that the aldermen in Richmond, Virginia, always vote to suppress and then take the first train to New York to see. Inasmuch as my proofreader is a regular churchgoer, it would be of no avail for me to try to tell you the plot of the play. I am sure he would bluepencil it. As a gossipy starter, however, it may be hinted that the farce has to do with a young widow who must be a mother in a very exactly stipulated period of time if she wishes to inherit her husband's property, and whose particular gentleman friend is supposed to have started on a trip round the world. The first act is devoted to stipulation; the second goes in for population, and the third for explanation. Miss May Buckley, as the widow, makes that character one protracted gurgle, and Miss Mabel Frenyear, in the part of a frisky maid, also thinks she is an actress.

MISS BLANCHE RING is the Mary Garden of musical comedy. At that, I do not believe the comparison is fair to the former. Miss Garden has rivals; Miss Ring hasn't. She can take a light little melody and can sing it into the puckered lips of the nation; she can take a yip-ay-adying song and make it earn a living for the families of a thousand Italian organ grinders; she can set the pianos in every flat in Harlem going—in a word, when she sings, the world sings with her. "THE YANKEE GIRL" is Miss Ring's starring vehicle, and it ought to put rings—diamond rings—on her fingers and those of her managers.

A GLANCE AT THE SPRING FICTION

By H. L. MENCKEN

WE have with us this evening a German novelist worth reading, a French novelist worth reading—and watching. To relieve suspense, it may be as well to say at once that their names are Hermann Sudermann, Pierre de Coulevain and Charles Tenney Jackson, respectively, and that their books are denominated "THE SONG OF SONGS" (*Huebsch*, \$1.40), "ON THE BRANCH" (*Dutton*, \$1.25) and "THE DAY OF SOULS" (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50).

Sudermann is no stranger to Americans. We know him as the author of "Magda" ("Heimat"), the best play that has come out of Germany since Ibsen opened his famous college of playwriting in the Café Luitpold at Munich; and some of us also know him as the author of other excellent plays and of several very bad ones, and as a novelist who has sat under a number of masters and done creditable work in the manner of each. He is, in brief, in the front rank of living German writers, and saving only Gerhart Hauptmann, there is no other man in that rank.

Extravagant praise? Not at all. I am speaking just now of *living* German authors. You will find no Goethes and Schillers, nor even Lessings, Klopstocks, Herders and Heines in Germany today, for the Germans are too busy in their factories and shipyards to be producing great literature. But if Sudermann thus falls short of the giants, it is certainly not absurd to compare him to the captains of the second line—to the younger Dumas

and Thomas Hardy, D'Annunzio and Pinero, Maeterlinck and George Moore. He is, indeed, a man of rare and splendid talents, a shrewd observer of the human comedy, an acute analyst, an artist with a sure feeling for color and form; and if he had but one thing more, he might easily cross the shadowy line separating the merely respectable from the incomparable. That one thing is an individual, comprehensible and credible philosophy of life, born of a mighty personality—a philosophy which would set off its author in an unmistakable way from all other delvers into motives and all other interpreters of acts.

It goes without saying that such a philosophy is to be found in the writings of every imaginative writer of true genius. We cannot think of Dickens, for example, without recalling his sentimental view of the world, with its cardinal doctrine that all human ills are to be cured by love. And in the same way, we cannot detach Thackeray from his tolerant cynicism, nor Shakespeare from his proud resignationism, nor Milton from his lofty idealism, nor Fielding from his buoyant optimism, his belief in mankind, his firm conviction that the mere being alive is sufficient for happiness. A great writer's philosophical outlook is the essential part of him—the element that separates him, even more than his facility of expression, from the average man. Unless that outlook be comprehensible and unvarying—unless, by reading him, we can gain it, and the gaining of it helps us, in some measure, to face life with better understanding and greater

comfort, his work remains mere yarn spinning and we soon forget it.

In Sudermann a philosophy is lacking. He seems to be eternally flabbergasted by life. An observer of extraordinary shrewdness, he comes swiftly into the breakers when he attempts to interpret his observations. It is not that he is struck by the notion that life is meaningless—for that notion, as the case of Joseph Conrad proves, is not inconsistent with clear thinking—but that he seeks to read hazy, antagonistic and often puerile meanings into it. One too often misses in his novels and plays the passionate earnestness and certainty, the clear, clean cut logic that one finds in "Germinal," "Barry Lyndon" and "Anna Karénina." He is swayed too much by the grotesque literary "movements" which inflame and torture the *cognoscenti* of the Berlin cafés. He is alternately idealist and realist, revolutionist and reactionary, pessimist and optimist; and so his writings lose vitality, because there is no dominant master note in them expressive of the man and of the one man only.

This lack is woefully apparent in "THE SONG OF SONGS." The book, to summarize it in a phrase, is a study in feminine eroticism. We are introduced to Lily Czepanek at the period of adolescence, and we follow her closely until the fires of her youth are spent. Lily is no common drab, but a civilized and educated young woman, whose thirst for male caresses is constantly conditioned and ameliorated by other and more complex yearnings. And yet whenever the issue is fairly joined between a man and an idea, it is the man that always wins her. At sixteen she is enamored of a priggish student and makes a vain effort to seduce him. By the time she is eighteen she has become the hunted instead of the huntress, and it is now merely a matter of making her choice. She chooses a doddering colonel of cavalry—a decayed rake—a "connoisseur of women," as Sudermann calls him. The old fool marries her and carries her off to his castle in West Prussia.

And now begin Lily's real adventures. She is genuinely fond of the colonel and has a sincere desire to do him honor, but it quickly becomes evident that he is hopelessly deficient as a lover. A younger man volunteers for that exhausting office—an unmoral ex-lieutenant, who fights the colonel gaily when he is found out, and then laughs a light laugh and betakes himself to America, leaving Lily as a keepsake to a rich friend in Berlin. Lily, for a while, avoids the rich friend, saying to herself that she will stick to celibacy and earn a living. But before long we find her in a comfortable flat, paid for by the friend, and by and by strange hats begin to appear in the hall. One of the owners of hats is an earnest and innocent young scholar, and with him Lily falls desperately in love. It is a *grande passion* at last, and Lily begins to torture herself with the problem that always oppresses contaminated ladies when they fall in love: Shall she tell him everything at once, or wait for him to find out?

She decides upon the former course, and the scholar makes the noble answer that fools always make. He says he believes in her essential purity—that he thinks she has been a victim of circumstances—that he will trust her henceforth. And then, with one leg, as it were, over the altar rail, Lily pours out an alcoholic libation to the kindly gods—and in her liquorish babbling the truth comes out. The scholar, after all, is not altogether asinine. Once it becomes as plain as a pikestaff, he can tell the difference between sins that have sprung from within and sins that have been forced in from without. He now sees Lily for what she really is, and so he goes away, leaving her to her rich friend. Taking warning, she marries that gentleman out of hand. The years are passing, and another such chance may not come again.

As I have said, this story is well written and worth reading, but for all that, there is no firm grip in it. One wonders more than once what Sudermann himself thinks of Lily and her doings. His opinion is never clear; it

seems to vary, indeed, from chapter to chapter. In a truly great novel there is no such muddiness. We see everything clearly through one assertive personality. In "THE SONG OF SONGS" there are pale reflections of half a dozen personalities. Here and there Sudermann seems to be trying to write like Zola; in other places he is a romanticist; in yet other places he is not far from the sugary sentimentality of Heimbürg and *Das Gartenlaube*. Lily swoons at critical moments, like the heroine of a tale for chambermaids and high school girls. The best writing is in the first chapter, wherein Lily's home and her father and mother are described. If the rest of the book maintained the standard set there it would be a great novel. As it is, it is merely an uncommonly clever story.

"ON THE BRANCH" is half novel and half essay. The author, despite her masculine *nom de plume*, is a woman, and the history she endeavors to set forth is that of a woman. It is no conventional tale of young love and high hope. Love, indeed, is long since dead when it opens and hope has begun to wither. At our first glimpse of the woman she is probably fifty years old. True enough, we go back a bit into her past, but we review it as she has learned to review it herself—that is to say, somewhat objectively and in the light of the philosophic calm of middle age. The whole story, indeed, has to do with the genesis and development of that serenity which follows the decay of the passions of youth. We see an intelligent, introspective woman slipping into the autumn of life; we follow her, step by step, along the road to contentment.

It is hinted that the story, in great part, is autobiographic. Certainly, an air of reality clings to it. One gathers from it the impression that one has held converse during a pleasant holiday with an oldish woman of agreeable personality—a woman who has thought things out for herself and attained to clear self-expression, and yet one who remains throughout more the woman than the sage.

"THE DAY OF SOULS" is the third of our trio of books worth reading. According to "Who's Who in America," the author, Charles Tenney Jackson, is a Missourian, who has lived the roaring life of the armed camp and is now a newspaper man in San Francisco. We learn from that same book that "THE DAY OF SOULS" was in preparation as far back as the fall of 1907, when the biographies for the 1908-9 edition were prepared. This indicates that Mr. Jackson is a somewhat deliberate and careful workman, which fact, in itself, would be sufficient to separate him from the Oppenheims and the McCutcheons, the Chambersees and the Marion Crawfords. Much more convincing evidence of his differentiation is to be found in the story itself, for it is a story with a beginning, a middle and an end; a story with good writing in it and credible personages; a story showing keen observation and clear thought; a story that leads me to venture the prophecy, publicly and in indelible ink, that Mr. Jackson, if he keeps on writing and avoids religiously the snares of a department store success, will one day write a full-length, first-class novel, and maybe more than one.

Not that "THE DAY OF SOULS" is a masterpiece or even an entirely satisfying journeymanpiece. Far from it! As a matter of fact, the story wobbles in more than one place, and now and then the probabilities are a bit stretched; but these faults are more than counterbalanced by the virtues that accompany them. The fable itself is not complex. It concerns a young man who finds himself drawn down into the cesspool of moral and social rottenness which underlay the San Francisco that was before the earthquake, and with the manner of his redemption. Not only in scene, but also in method it recalls the Frank Norris of "McTeague." There are the same picturesque descriptions of the colorful town; there is the same genial humor; the same vein of mysticism crops up occasionally. It is no discredit to follow Frank Norris. If more of our young

novelists would study his novels there would be a more hopeful outlook for American letters.

I am not going into a detailed account of Mr. Jackson's story. The story itself is of much less importance than the way in which it is told. The author is upon the right track. Of all the young Americans whose books have come to me within the past two years, he and another Easterner transplanted to the Coast—to wit, Henry Milner Rideout, author of "Dragon's Blood"—give the greatest promise. Mr. Jackson is thirty-five years old and Mr. Rideout is thirty-three. By the time they are forty they will be better known.

Now come half a dozen or more books of the sort that smirk at us in the bookshops, from mighty pyramids, for two or three weeks—and then go to join the rose of yesterday. Such books, I take it, do no great harm in the world. They are written, in the main, in a tongue easily understood by anyone who speaks English, and their characters are inoffensive *automata* whose passions are seldom corrupting and never complex. They make few demands upon the emotions and none whatever upon the powers of ratiocination. In going through them, indeed, one observes that their psychic effect is confined to a feeling of mild irritation, as if some patient slave were tickling one's Adam's apple with a feather. It is not painful, that irritation, but it inhibits slumber and wards off introspection, and so the book itself serves a useful purpose, the which purpose is exactly the same as that of penuchle, comic supplements, jig-saw puzzles, crocheting or home drinking. That is to say, it kills time without outraging the body or burdening the mind. A man might wipe out a Sunday afternoon just as effectively by swallowing paregoric and falling snoring to the floor, but that would spoil his appetite for malt liquor in the evening. He might, again, spend the afternoon reading Kant, but that would involve a tedious exercise of the faculty of cognition. So he does neither, but,

instead, plays penuchle with the janitor, looks through the Sunday papers, practises the art of mixing gin fizzes or reads a popular novel.

One of the best of these anti-soporifics in the current lot is "LORD LOVELAND DISCOVERS AMERICA," by those refined and fashionable authors, C. N. and A. M. Williamson (*Doubleday, Page, \$1.20*). The Williamsons, as they say at Lake Mohonk, have a good deal of class to them. Nine times out of ten an automobile is the hero of their fable—an automobile much more human, but hardly more fascinating, than the dashing devil who drives it or the superbeautiful goddess who sits by his side, jogging him affectionately at every water break. Not uncommonly Royalty Itself inhabits the middle distance of the landscape. The air has an aristocratic keenness; no one bothers about Hell; there are excellent victuals three times a day. Altogether, the reader enjoys his glimpse of a richer, cleaner, happier world, and is the better for it.


In the present volume there is a slight variation, for Lord Loveland, when he lands in New York in search of an heiress, falls almost at once into the hands of the Goths and Huns, and so finds himself walking the highways of that pitiless town with a grotesque dress coat upon his back and no money in his pantaloons. Suffering purifies and ennobles Loveland. His heart grows soft; he learns to love; in the end he gains the honest affection of a — But I say no more. No, she is no gilded child of plutocracy, no minioned maid of Pittsburg, all money and freckles, ambition and thumbs. I doubt if the poor girl is worth over \$900,000. But she has a heart, and that heart goes out to Loveland.

"PASSERS-BY," by Anthony Partidge (*Little-Brown, \$1.50*), is a tale of mystery. At the start we behold a beautiful street singer, accompanied by an intelligent monkey and a ferocious hunchback, going down a dark alley in London to sing. Why an alley? Because Fate wills it so. The rear wall of

a great hotel looms high on one side, and far up, at an open window, an elegant gentleman smokes a cigarette. What more natural than for him to change his collar, light another cigarette, come downstairs, draw a staggering wallop from the hunchback, and then, after regaining his senses, take the girl to dinner at a sumptuous lobster palace? She goes in her rags, but her beauty benumbs the headwaiter and so she gets all she wants to eat—aye, and to drink!

And now enters the wicked Marquis of Ellingham, a statesman with a past so dark that even his wife hates to think of it. How did he live before he came into his peerage? So far, no one seems to know. But one hears of a sudden the clank of chains and scents the disinfectants of a dungeon. Paris—the police—the Black Fox—Jacques Leblun, the French detective! Again I cease. It wouldn't be fair to tell you all that happens, and besides, I don't know. The true way to read a story of mystery is to stop in the middle—and then burn the book, or, if the rules forbid fires in the cells, send it back to the warden. Its mystery thus remains an interminable delight, to torture you pleasantly for all eternity. If you read to the end the solution is usually so absurdly simple that you scorn yourself for not having guessed it, or so diabolically complex that you can't fathom it.

OUR next, brethren, is "THE SEA OF MATRIMONY," by Jessie H. Childs (*Broadway Pub. Co.*, \$1.50). The voyager upon that tempestuous ocean is Elise Sinclair, a lady far past her non-age. She has been married, indeed, for a good long while before she meets John Maynard, one of nature's noblemen, but as she gazes into his eyes a tidal wave of passion goes roaring through her system. Their lips meet in a kiss that may be scored thus:

ff.  ffff. sf. !!!!!
crescendo

But nothing worse ensues. "Few women, fortunately," says the author, "have the polygamous tendency which seems so natural to most men." And yet it takes three hundred pages to tell the story of Elise's battle against the magnetism radiated from John Maynard's eyes. Part of the time she escapes temptation by taking a hand in the amours of her cousin, Winthrop Raymond. Winthrop has an affair with Mary Adams, his stenographer, and it is only her death that saves a scandal. Elise, after attending Mary's funeral, returns to her own troubles, and for a while it seems certain that she and John will end as fugitives from justice. But deliverance comes to her at last in the form of Hindoo philosophy. The philosopher is a grafter named Mrs. Morse, who has been to India and penetrated to the inmost secrets of psychotherapy. She saves Elise without recourse to drugs or surgery. A few whispered words and Error yields to Truth. The Divine All gobbles those immoral Red Corpuscles. In tune with the Infinite, cleansed of all Earthly Impurity, denaturalized by the Word, absorbed in the Eternal Consciousness, the Ether, the Me, the Afflatus, Elise finds that she can look at John, and even touch him, without dizziness or shortness of breath. As we say good-bye to them they are in the doldrums of the sixties, and Elise's son Henry is about to marry John's daughter Louise. Thus their Life Currents mingle at last, engulfed by the One.

A masterpiece of fiction! A book of the tenth dimension! How puny sound the philosophical maunderings of Kant, Spencer and Nietzsche, the scientific bombast of Huxley, Haeckel and Weismann, beside such clear statements of Fundamental Truth! Welcome to the synagogue, O subtle Miss Childs! A fair Sir Oliver Lodge come to judgment!

"THE LIVING MUMMY," by Ambrose Pratt (*Stokes*, \$1.50), is a thriller of conventional cut. No doubt the astute reader has already guessed from

a glance at the title that the scene is Egypt, that there are archeologists in it, that one of them discovers a remarkable mummy and brings the thing to life, and that the resurrected mummy plays the devil. It is even so—and much more! A good deal of quasi-scientific flapdoodle is thrown in for *lagniappe*, and the English, in the main, is rather better than that of the average Indiana genius.

"CAB NO. 44," by R. F. Foster (Stokes, \$1.50), is a yarn of mystery and indistinguishable from any other yarn of mystery. If you like yarns of mystery, you will like this yarn of mystery—which goes without saying. If, on the contrary, you do not like yarns of mystery, you will not like this yarn of mystery—which also goes without saying. It is impossible to say any more, for yarns of mystery are seldom to be judged by the standards made and ordained for ordinary books. A new race of critics should be bred to study them, determine their canons and write about them learnedly. The same critics might devote their idle moments to those allied art forms, the college yell, the Salvation Army hymn, the stump speech, the New Thought essay and the novelized drama.

WHICH reminds me that two new novelized dramas await examination. They are "THE SINS OF SOCIETY," by Cecil Raleigh, who also wrote the melodrama upon which it is based (*Dillingham*, \$1.50), and "THE FORTUNE HUNTER," a version of Winchell Smith's comedy by Louis Joseph Vance (*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50). Of the first it may be said quite frankly that it is villainous. Mr. Raleigh is an English play manufacturer of the fourth class, who has the contract for supplying the annual Drury Lane melodrama. He differs in degree, but not in kind, from Theodore Kremer, Owen Davis and Hal Reid. In the hierarchy of letters his place is not far above that of Sylvanus Cobb and the Duchess. Among dramatists, even Charles Klein and other such platitudinizers are beyond him.

He is, in brief, a bad maker of bad plays, and "THE SINS OF SOCIETY" proves that he is a worse maker of worse novels. The story is tawdry, silly, cheap, banal. Its characters are the stuffed dummies of the popular stage. It is written in the strained, ridiculous fashion of a dime novel. The very capitalization is upon an absurd plan, recalling the compositions of blockhead schoolboys. It has no merit that I have been able to find. It is utter and unmitigated balderdash.

Coming after such, "THE FORTUNE HUNTER" seems almost good. But the difference between the two is merely one of degree. Both belong to the lowest stratum of printed books—below the works of Marie Corelli and Hall Caine, even below those of the psychical researchers.

"THE SEVENTH NOON" (*Small-Maynard*, \$1.50) is a new thriller by Frederick Orin Bartlett, author of "The Web of the Golden Spider." As literature it scores a zero of diameter equal to the earth's, but as an antiseptific it has considerable efficacy. The hero, finding life sour to the palate, takes a dose of some mysterious henbane which will kill him in a week, and resolves to devote his last seven days to good deeds. Those good deeds take the form of helping a beautiful maiden in distress—and thereby hangs a galloping tale. Peter Donaldson does not die. Not on your life! The poison shakes him, but doesn't actually kill him. On the last page he and the maiden are face to face. Her eyes grow moist and she smiles. The joy of it is too much for her. . . .

Mr. Bartlett does not give the name of the poison that Donaldson so rashly swallows. By the aid of a friendly toxicologist I am able to supply that lack. It is a synthetic alkaloid called anticamphotetrahydroquinon sulphobenzoisalicetryiacidomanganine.

"DEEP SEA WARRIORS," by Basil Lubbock (*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50), is a chronicle of the sea, and the canned

review on the cover says that it "deserves to stand with that classic of two generations ago, R. H. Dana's 'Two Years Before the Mast.'" In that judgment I find myself unable to acquiesce. I have no doubt whatever that Mr. Lubbock has had a lot of experience at sea, and that he makes no landsman's blunders when he discourses of the good ship *Benares's* rigging, but it is one thing to know the sea and quite another thing to write a first-rate sea story. "DEEP SEA WARRIORS" belongs to a class some distance below the first. It has plenty of action, plenty of meteorology and plenty of polyglot dialogue, but it misses, by many miles, the fine thrills of "Two Years Before the Mast," the abiding reality of "The Cruise of the *Cachelot*," and the incomparable art of "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*."

"THE DANGER TRAIL," by James Oliver Curwood (*Bobbs-Merrill*, \$1.50), need not detain us. It is a tale of love and daring in the Frozen North, with the customary American hero and the orthodox half-breed heroine. As such tales go, it is not a bad one. The fighting begins promptly; there is plenty of it, and the hero faces death like a man. But it cannot be said that the author gets much suspense into the chronicle. When on page twelve John Howland glances out of the window of the Windsor Hotel at Prince Albert and sees in the darkness "a face on which the shimmering moonlight falls," you know very well that somewhere toward page three hundred that face and John's face will touch noses pleasantly in a passionate, ante-nuptial buss.

FINALLY, to make an end of novels, we come to two that are already familiar to you, for both have appeared in the SMART SET as novelettes. One of them is "THE DUKE'S PRICE," by Demetra and Kenneth Brown (*Houghton-Mifflin*, \$1.50), and the other is "THE MAN OUTSIDE," by Wyndham Martyn (*Dodd-Mead*, \$1.50). The former was printed in the November, 1909, number under the title of "The

Romance of an American Duchess," and the latter in the September, 1909, number, as "John Paget's Progress." To each a good deal of new matter has been added. You may here look for me to prove that I am uncompromisingly just, even when dealing with the work of colleagues, by denouncing both stories as bad ones; but the facts in the case rob you of that elevating exhibition, for they enable me to lay my hand on my heart and say that both are good ones.

OF books about spooks there is no end. The eloquent Hyslop, the pious Lodge, the inimitable Garland and a dozen other serpents of unearthly wisdom are on the job day and night, and scarcely a month goes by without its new volume, dripping with amazing syllogisms and epoch-making marvels. The latest is "EUSAPIA PALLADINO AND HER PHENOMENA" (*Dodge*, \$2.00), by Hereward Carrington. Carrington is now Eusapia's manager and press agent, and in consequence the vulgar may be disposed to scoff at his testimonials, but his book should still those sneers, for it shows how cynically he once doubted her and how she brought him into camp. He describes her tricks in great detail, with photographs, diagrams and lists of witnesses, and defies anyone to explain them.

This matter of table tapping and other such buncombe is such an old story that I hesitate to go over it. To the man of what Professor James calls a "tough" mind, the so-called "proofs" of the necromancers are tedious nonsense, but to those with the will to believe they are abundantly convincing. It is all a question of temperament, of training, of mental habit. The man of the first class maintains that the burden of proof is upon the table tappers—that they should come out of their dark rooms and do their tricks under fair test conditions, or forever hold their peace. The man of the second class, on the contrary, holds that all their claims are to be granted until disproved, in the face of the plain fact that it is impossible, as a rule, to dis-

prove them. This last position makes intelligent debate impossible. As for me, I am firmly convinced, after reading Mr. Carrington's earnest book, that Eusapia is an old girl of deep humor, who must get many a hearty but secret chuckle out of the credulity of those who pay hard cash to see her perform. That sane human beings should still believe that she communes with spirits, after she has been detected so often in unblushing fraud, seems a far more marvelous thing to me than any of the miracles she claims to perform.

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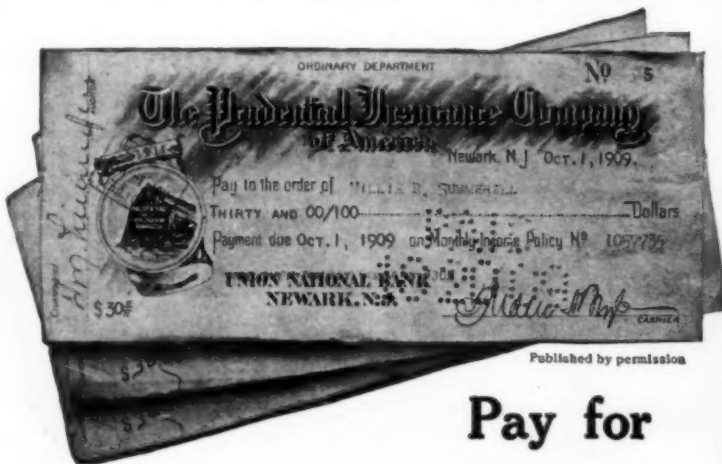
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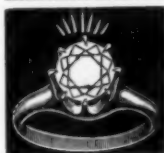
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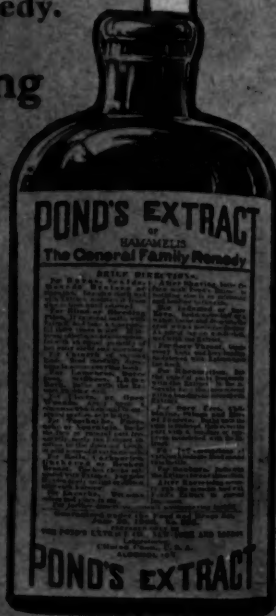
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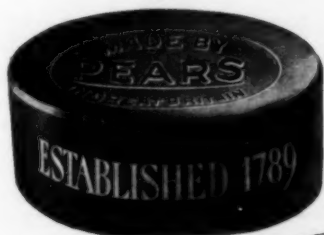
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ESTABLISHED 1875

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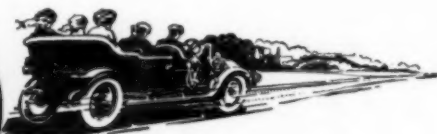
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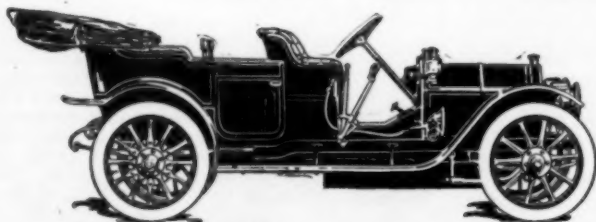


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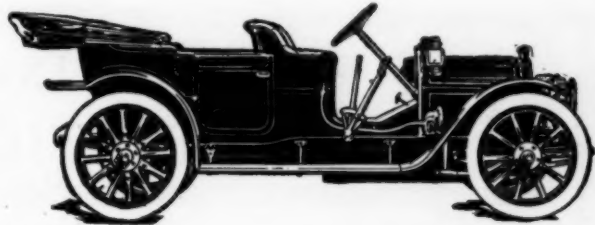


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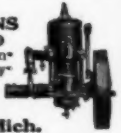
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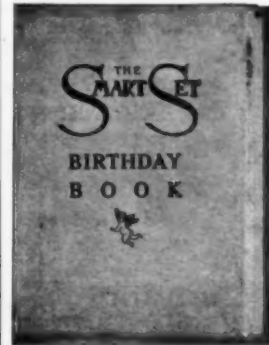
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

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